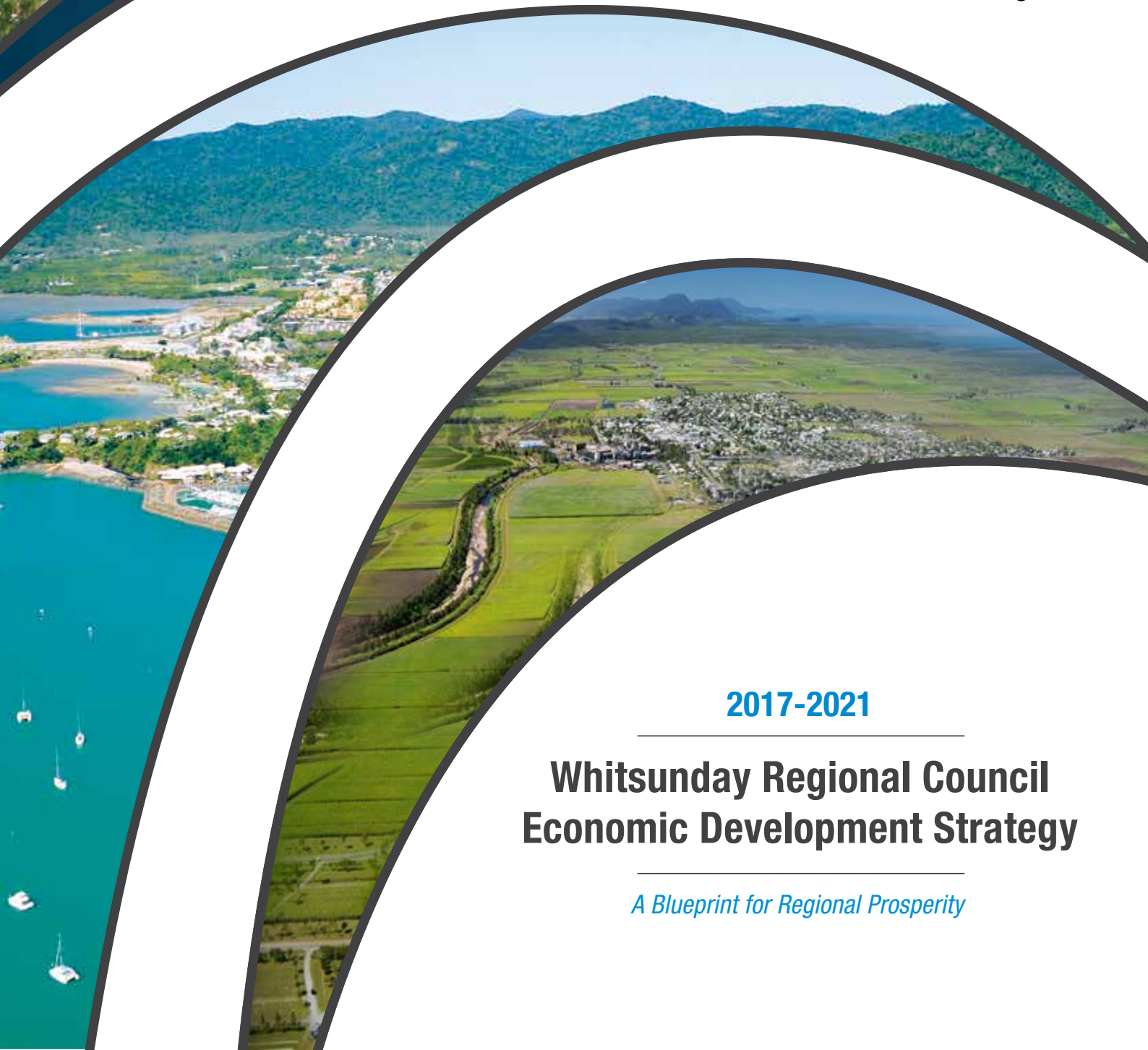
Whitsunday Regional Council



2017-2021

Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy

A Blueprint for Regional Prosperity

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 has been prepared on behalf of:

It has been prepared by:

SC Lennon & Associates Pty Ltd

ACN 109 471 936

Offices in Brisbane and Melbourne

PO Box 45

The Gap Queensland Australia 4061

p: (07) 3312 2375

m: 0410 550 272

e: sasha@sashalennon.com.au

w: www.sashalennon.com.au

Authors: Sasha Lennon and Anthony Whitaker

Disclaimer

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Executive Summary

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PURPOSE AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 is a strategy for the region. Informed by research, analysis and consultation with the communities of the region, it provides Whitsunday Regional Council, as its custodian, with a clear, actionable and achievable 'road map' for economic development until 2021.

Whitsunday Regional Council's approach to economic development is aligned with its corporate planning framework and it embraces the wider regional objectives of the Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3), Regional Development Australia Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday and the Queensland Government through its Advancing Our Cities and Regions Strategy.

AN INFORMED AND TARGETED APPROACH

Boasting a strong and relatively diverse economy and with a population of 34,300, around 3,500 businesses, a labour force of 19,500 and almost 14,000 jobs, the Whitsunday Regional Council area has the potential to become a driver of the North Queensland economy.

This is despite the impacts of Cyclone Debbie which, in March 2017, caused tremendous damage and economic loss affecting important infrastructure and the region's key industries of mining, agriculture and tourism. The Economic Development Strategy recognises the cyclone's impact and a number of actions contained in this plan directly refer to the Whitsunday Regional Council Local Recovery Plan which is designed to put the region 'back in business'.

Attracting investment and supporting local business is a feature of the Economic Development Strategy and small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are a very important component of the Whitsunday Regional Council area's economy. Non-employing businesses and 'micro-businesses' (those employing fewer than five staff) together account for 85% of businesses in the Whitsunday Regional Council area.

Mining, tourism and agriculture are the three 'pillars' of the Whitsunday regional economy. Other industries like transport and construction are closely integrated with the three pillars through local supply chain links. The region's population-driven industries like retail trade, personal services, health and education, are reliant on the three pillars for their own sustainability and growth.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION AND COUNCIL'S CHARTER

The vision for the Whitsunday Regional Council area is a statement of intent regarding the region's economic future.

Our Whitsunday: Our Economic Future

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

Through innovation and growth in a diversity of sustainable industries, the Whitsunday Regional Council area will be a region of choice in which to live, visit, work and invest.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

The vision is supported by Council's leadership and its commitment to sustainable growth as encapsulated in its economic development charter. The economic development charter articulates how Whitsunday Regional Council pro-actively promotes, facilitates and co-ordinates economic development activities in the region.

Whitsunday Regional Council's Economic Development Charter

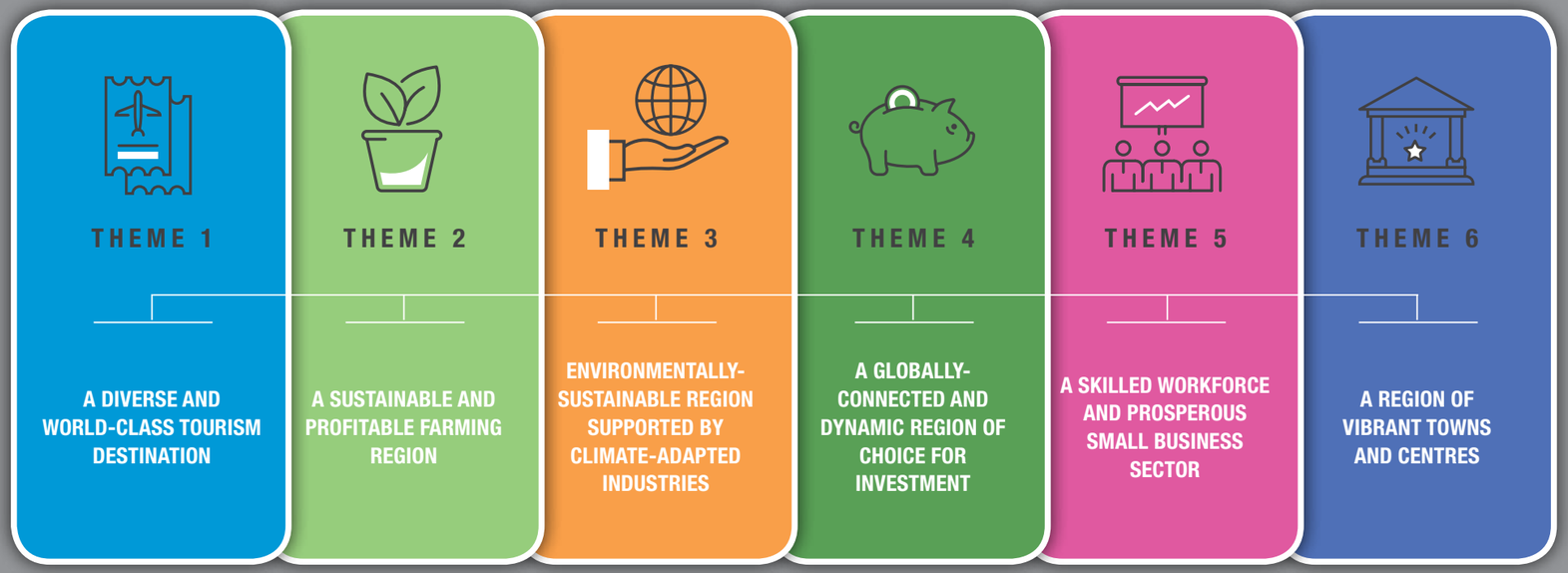
Whitsunday Regional Council works in collaboration with its partners in industry, government and the community, to secure a prosperous future that is driven by innovation and investment in strategic projects and industries that will drive regional growth.

The vision and Council's charter inform the Economic Development Strategy themes and actions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION AREAS

The *Whitsunday Regional Council* Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 documents a plan of action for Council and its partners in government, the non-government sector, industry and the community to facilitate change towards a prosperous future for the Whitsunday Regional Council area.

The Strategy contains six strategy themes or 'action areas'. They are:



Each theme in the Strategy represents an area of strategic intent. The strategic objective statement for each theme, is articulated as follows.

A Diverse and World-class Tourism Destination

Take a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to promotion and development to expand the Whitsunday Region's tourism offer with a depth and diversity of attractions and facilities and grow the market for coastal and land-based experiences that are unique to the region.

A Sustainable and Profitable Farming Region

Capitalise on the Whitsunday Region's strengths and opportunities in sugar production, beef cattle, horticulture and aquaculture to value-add and meet demand from existing and new markets in Australia and overseas.

An Environmentally-Sustainable Region Supported by Climate-Adapted Industries

Support a healthy and liveable natural environment for everyone in the Whitsunday Region to enjoy by providing means to encourage and support climate-adapted industries as key contributors to the region's economic development.

A Globally-connected and Dynamic Region of Choice for Investment

Establish and continually promote the Whitsunday Region as a globally-connected region of choice for investment, supported by 'best-in-class' strategic infrastructure including transport, communications, water and energy.

A Skilled Workforce and Prosperous Small Business Sector

Collaborate with industry, the education and training sector and other tiers of government to enhance the Whitsunday Region's skills base and to support innovative, productive and prosperous small businesses throughout the region.

A Region of Vibrant Towns and Centres

Support the sustainable development of the Whitsunday Region's towns and activity centres by providing all communities with vibrant and prosperous places to access employment, retail goods and services and essential community services and facilities.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

A suite of 70 individual actions has been prepared across the six themes. They include:

- **COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS:** These are actions that will involve specific tasks for Whitsunday Regional Council and an allocation of human, physical and financial resources. Action statements are to be sufficiently specific so that the desired outcome can be measured; and
- **COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS:** These are advocacy or support initiatives where the implementation of the actions is to be led by agencies other than Council.

The actions are further categorised according to whether they represent: **'catalyst project planning & development'** which requires priority action combined with a well-planned course of project implementation; and 'strategic programming' that can be addressed as part of Council's day-to-day economic development planning and facilitation functions in a strategic and informed manner.

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy identifies actions for the five years 2017 to 2021. An implementation plan will be identified and articulated each year.

2017 Implementation Plan

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROMOTION AND FACILITATION ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL AREA, WHICH WILL BE INITIATED OVER THE FIRST 12 MONTHS OF THIS STRATEGY, ARE:

- Complete the planning and development approvals processes for a mixed-use 5-star hotel and entertainment precinct at Airlie Beach (Action 1.1).
- Prepare a business case for the Bowen Marina site (Action 1.2).
- Prepare a concept plan and a business case to develop a regional food produce and tourist centre in the Bowen area (Action 1.3).
- Develop and resource a program to facilitate land-based tourism product development across the Whitsunday Region (Action 1.11).
- Establish a clear policy position on infrastructure delivery for long-term water security for the Whitsunday Region and proceed with project implementation (Action 2.1).
- Support the development of a concept plan and business case for the Bowen food processing plant (Action 2.2).

- Prepare business cases for the delivery of priority transport infrastructure (Action 2.3).
- Initiate a collaborative project with the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association and Trade and Investment Queensland to support the participation of growers in strategically targeted international trade missions (Action 2.8.
- Progress the opportunity to establish Bowen TAFE as a campus for international studies in horticulture and English (Action 2.9).
- Explore the concept of an innovation hub including opportunities for education and training utilising existing TAFE facilities at Cannonvale for climate adaptation (Action 3.1).
- Identify and plan for strategic development sites throughout the Whitsunday Region (Action 4.1).
- Implement the Whitsunday Coast Airport Strategic Plan 2016-2021 (Action 4.2).
- Prepare and publish a Whitsunday Region investor prospectus (Action 4.3).
- Establish an investment enquiry protocol for the Whitsunday Region (Action 4.4).
- Promote the Whitsunday Regional Council area as a location for State and Federal government services (Action 4.7).
- Develop a 'Doing Business in the Whitsundays' prospectus (Action 5.6).
- Identify opportunities for additional training programs to support local mining sector employment opportunities (Action 5.14).
- Work with Adani to develop a trade training centre in Collinsville (Action 5.15).
- Implement the 'Greening & Growing Bowen' project (Action 6.1).
- Lead negotiations to develop a mixed-use 5-star hotel and entertainment precinct at Airlie Beach (Action 6.2).
- Implement the master plan for the Proserpine Town Centre and Lake Proserpine (Action 6.3).
- Implement the Airlie Beach Foreshore Revitalisation Project (Action 6.4).
- Progress discussions for a State High School at Cannonvale (Action 6.14).

Showcase Bowen's quality produce

Economic Development Strategy Implementation Outcomes

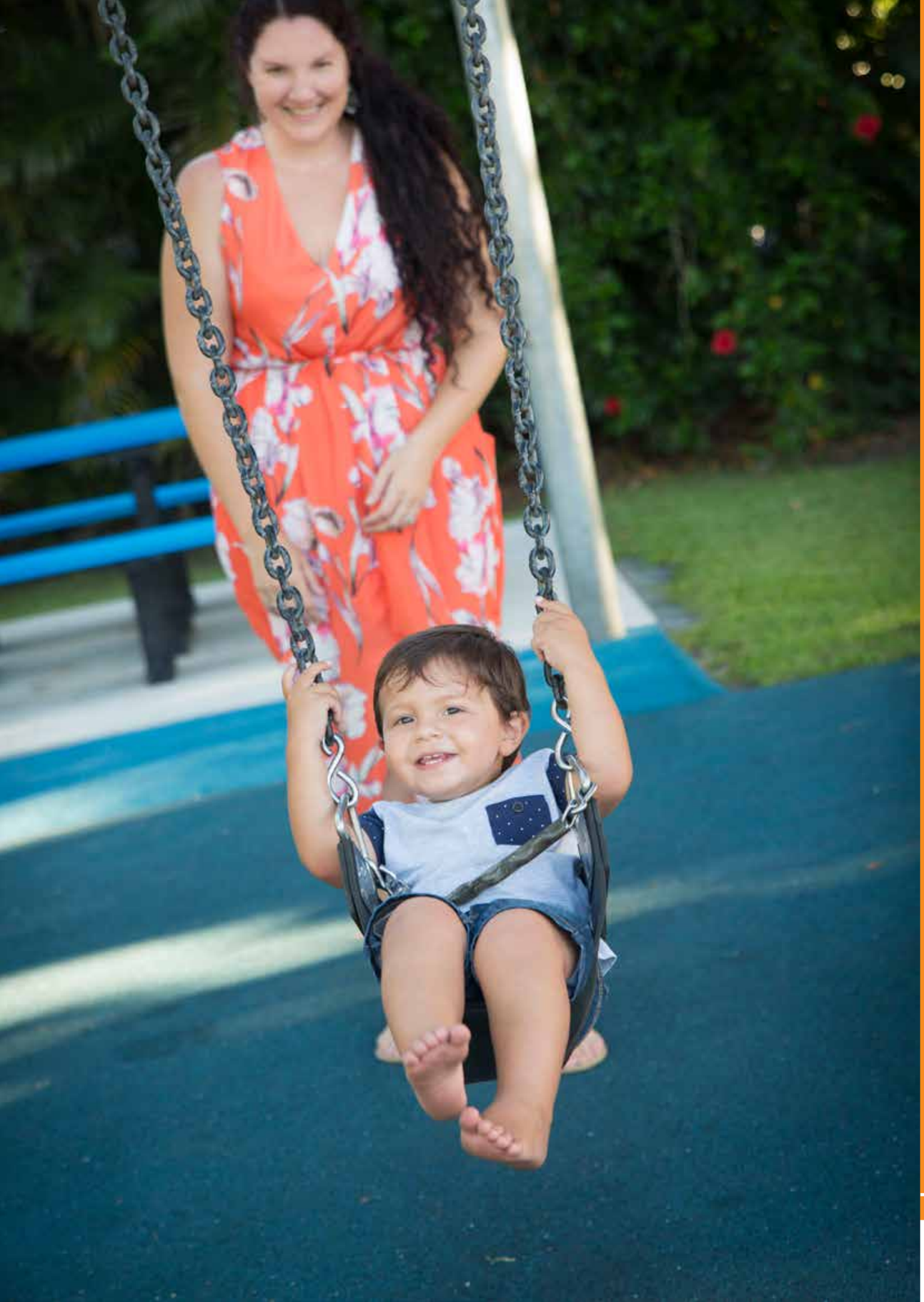
THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY SUPPORTS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL'S THREE KEY DESIRED ECONOMIC OUTCOMES BEING:

- A $6 billion economy (a 25 per cent increase in the size of the region's economy).
- 15,000 jobs (up from 14,000 in 2017).
- Inter-regional exports that account for more than half the region's GRP (currently around 42%).

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy will be reviewed annually with an update in four years.

Hotel precinct to expand

Hill Inlet, Whitsunday Island



Whitsunday Regional Council

2017-2021

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Our Whitsunday:
Our Economic Future

1. Introduction

1.1 STRATEGY PURPOSE AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The *Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021* is a strategy for the region. Informed by research, analysis and consultation with the communities of Bowen, Proserpine, Collinsville, Cannonvale and Airlie Beach, it provides Council, as custodian of the plan, with a clear, actionable and achievable 'road map' for economic development in the Whitsunday Regional Council area until 2021.

Boasting a strong and relatively diverse economy and with a population of 34,300, around 3,500 businesses, a labour force of 19,500 and almost 14,000 jobs, the Whitsunday Regional Council area has the potential to become the economic powerhouse of North Queensland. This is despite the impacts of Cyclone Debbie which, in March 2017, caused tremendous damage and economic loss affecting important infrastructure and the region's key industries of mining, agriculture and tourism. The Economic Development Strategy recognises the cyclone's impact and a number of actions contained in this plan directly refer to the Whitsunday Regional Council Local Recovery Plan, which is designed to put the region 'back in business'.

'Economic development' refers to the mutually-reinforcing relationship between improvements in economic activity, community wellbeing, cultural diversity, a sense of 'place' and the environment. Measured in terms of income and employment growth, economic development is also gauged by improvements in education, skills, health, culture, community wellbeing, 'place' and the environment. Ultimately, economic development is about improving the quality of life experienced in the Whitsunday Region's communities.

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy puts in place a plan of action to help nurture the foundations for prosperity – like strategic infrastructure, community services and facilities, access to employment and places where industry can invest and do business. It recognises the region's recent and longer-term challenges, while embracing opportunities to build on its comparative and competitive advantages, to grow its key industries in agriculture, mining and tourism and to diversify into new areas of economic activity.

Whitsunday Regional Council's approach to economic development is aligned with its corporate planning framework and it has been prepared in the context of Council's broader program of work and strategic objectives. The Economic Development Strategy also embraces the wider regional development objectives of the Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3), Regional Development Australia Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday and the Queensland Government through its Advancing Our Cities and Regions Strategy.

Figure 1. Whitsunday Region Economic Development Planning Framework

1.2 THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

The economic development vision is informed by extensive community consultation, Council's Corporate Plan and the 2036 vision for the Whitsunday Region. The vision responds to the region's strengths and attributes as well as the issues, challenges and identified opportunities to pursue a prosperous future.

The economic development vision statement, which encapsulates the Whitsunday Region's desired economic future, is presented as follows:

Our Whitsunday: Our Economic Future

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

Through innovation and growth in a diversity of sustainable industries, the Whitsunday Regional Council area will be a region of choice in which to live, visit, work and invest.

The vision is supported by Whitsunday Regional Council's commitment to sustainable growth as encapsulated in its economic development charter.

1.3 WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

By virtue of its commitment to serve the local business and resident communities of Airlie Beach, Bowen, Cannonvale, Collinsville and Proserpine, Whitsunday Regional Council is heavily invested in economic development. And while business and industry 'drives' economic development, it is the role of Council to help provide and nurture the pre-conditions for prosperity.

As a result, 'economic development' cuts across all facets of Whitsunday Regional Council's planning and project priorities and its day-to-day operations engaging with residents (across a diverse and varied demographic), local businesses, representative bodies such as chambers of commerce, business groups and tourism associations, visitors, prospective investors, State and Federal Government agencies and other organisations.

The economic development charter represents Whitsunday Regional Council's commitment to promoting, facilitating and co-ordinating economic development activities. It is defined by a set of principles which guide the preparation and implementation of the economic development action plan contained in this Strategy.

Whitsunday Regional Council's Economic Development Charter

Whitsunday Regional Council works in collaboration with its partners in industry, government and the community, to secure a prosperous future that is driven by innovation and investment in strategic projects and industries that will drive regional growth. It does this by:

1. Prioritising initiatives and activities that **support the growth and development of the Whitsunday Region's 'pillar' industries of agriculture, mining and tourism**, with an emphasis on new opportunities in value-added economic activities which target existing, new and emerging markets;

2. Promoting **a partnership approach to tourism promotion and development**, working in collaboration with tourism bodies and the tourism industry to enhance regional branding, marketing, product development, visitor servicing and support infrastructure;

3. Prioritising activities that **support local industry diversification** and the growth of 'knowledge-based' industry activities in agriculture, mining and manufacturing, in related service industries such as the technical and professional services and in the region's health care and education sectors;

4. Pro-actively **engaging with the Whitsunday Region's small to medium-sized business** communities to respond to shared issues and opportunities for local business growth and development; and

5. Pro-actively **promoting the Whitsunday Region to prospective investors**, using a strategic, informed and targeted approach consistent with the long-term vision for the region's economic development.

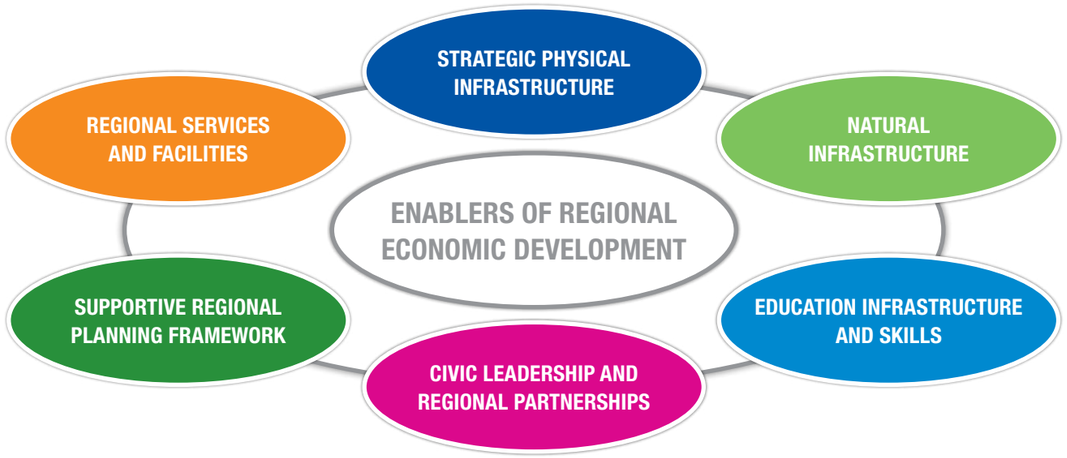
Guided by its economic development charter and the action plan presented in this Strategy, Whitsunday Regional Council will play its role in helping to influence the factors that facilitate the competitiveness and success of the region's businesses and industries across all sectors of the economy.

1.4 PROVIDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR PROSPERITY

While business and industry drives economic development, Whitsunday Regional Council - along with other agents of change such as State and Federal government agencies - influences the 'enabling environment' for prosperity, that is, the services, infrastructure and support mechanisms required to facilitate economic activity.

These enablers include local infrastructure, such as transport networks, appropriately zoned land, the form and function of the region's towns and activity centres, as well as community services and facilities such as local libraries and aged care services. They also include the Whitsunday Region's 'lifestyle' attributes - including its parks and gardens, heritage buildings, arts and cultural services and facilities and its recreation, leisure and entertainment facilities.

Figure 2. The Enablers of Regional Economic Development *(Source: SC Lennon & Associates)*



Another important enabler of economic development is the local policy, town planning and regulatory framework that is supportive of business innovation, investment and industry growth.

Enablers which Council is not directly responsible for, but which it can influence to varying degrees through collaborative partnerships with other tiers of government or institutions include regional transport and communications infrastructure, health and community services, education infrastructure, research and innovation infrastructure and a supportive regional planning framework. How to nurture and/or provide the critical enablers is an important consideration for the Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy.

The Economic Development Strategy is a tool for Council to influence the factors that facilitate the resilience, competitiveness and the success of local businesses. Taking a strategic and informed approach, it guides Council and its partners in promoting new business investment, helping to diversify and future-proof the economy against peaks and troughs associated with global economic trends and impacts.

Apart from the direct and indirect influence Whitsunday Regional Council has over economic development enablers like local transport infrastructure, community facilities, urban form and function and the local land use planning framework, there are many things that Council can do or already does, to co-ordinate, facilitate and promote economic development throughout the region.

The role of Whitsunday Regional Council across its various departments in economic development promotion and facilitation is critical to community prosperity. As part of its whole-of-organisation interface with economic development, it has what might be considered 'core' economic development functions and activities with a focus on policies and strategies to attract investment and to support and grow the Whitsunday Region's local business and industry base.

Supporting local business success

Using this Economic Development Strategy as a guide, Whitsunday Regional Council's Economic Development Unit will engage in a number of areas, either on its own, as the lead in partnership with other areas of Council, or in a support role to others. It will continue to do this through:

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

- **Strategic Land Use Planning and Place Management** - Whitsunday Regional Council will continue to work to ensure strategic land use planning is responsive to economic needs and opportunities. It will continue to undertake the studies and research necessary to identify things like retail and commercial floorspace capabilities and requirements, so it knows what different localities within the Whitsunday Regional Council area can or cannot accommodate in the future and then plan appropriately for that.

Infrastructure investment

- **Investment in Infrastructure and Services** - Efficient and effective infrastructure underpins economic activity and is fundamental to a prosperous local economy. Whitsunday Regional Council, in its role as a co-ordinator of local economic development activities, has a responsibility to ensure that such fundamentals for investment and economic development are addressed. This includes directly providing those infrastructure items that fall under Council's control.

- **Economic Development Advocacy and Partnerships** – Whitsunday Regional Council provides a unifying voice for communities and for local businesses when lobbying State and Federal Governments on key economic or infrastructure issues. By undertaking the necessary investigations and preparing informed business cases, Council provides a conduit for State and Federal Government funding for bigger infrastructure projects like sporting, community and cultural facilities and health, education and transport infrastructure.

- **Local Business Support** - Local enterprise often presents the greatest potential to take advantage of new investment opportunities and a successful investment enhancement strategy will be one that encourages additional investment from business and industry already located in the Whitsunday Region.

- **Investment Attraction** - Investment is fundamental to economic development, and access to international, national and regional markets is a key determinant of long-term economic growth. The role of Whitsunday Regional Council in this regard is to help facilitate investment by promoting what the region has to offer prospective investors. It also has a role to play in attracting government investment in critical infrastructure. It does this through the identification of strategic regional priorities (as articulated in this Economic Development Strategy) and then preparing business cases to inform both Council and other government funding support for key projects.

Attracting long term economic growth

1.5 A BASIS FOR ACTION

Using these 'core' economic development functions as a basis for action, and guided by the Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021, Whitsunday Regional Council will play a meaningful and effective role in economic development through the pursuit and implementation of workable, practical actions.

Prioritising where Council's resources can best be directed for the purpose of facilitating and promoting the economic development of the region is a key consideration of this Economic Development Strategy.

By informing a strategic and targeted approach to economic development, the ***Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021*** provides Council with the tools it needs to influence the factors that facilitate the resilience, competitiveness and ultimate success of local businesses.

2. Informing a Strategic Approach to Economic Development

2.1 THE WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL ECONOMY: A SNAPSHOT

Boasting a strong and relatively diverse economy and with a population of approximately 34,300, the Whitsunday Region encompasses a total land area of almost 24,000 square kilometres.

The region includes Airlie Beach, Bowen, Cannonvale, Collinsville and Proserpine, as well as other rural and coastal communities and residential areas. The resident population of the Whitsunday Region has grown steadily over the ten years to 2016, at an average annual rate of 1.25%.

The Whitsunday Region has a labour force of 19,500 and accommodates almost 14,000 jobs. The major industries in the Whitsunday region are tourism, mining, construction, agriculture and manufacturing (which is underpinned by food product manufacturing (sugar cane processing), metal product manufacturing and machinery and parts manufacturing. The Whitsunday coast is a gateway to the '74 islands wonders' and to the Great Barrier Reef. In the year ending March 2017, the Whitsunday Region had approximately 477,000 domestic overnight visitors and 243,000 international overnight visitors. The region also contains agriculturally and mining rich areas, including direct access to the northern tip of the coal-rich Bowen Basin.

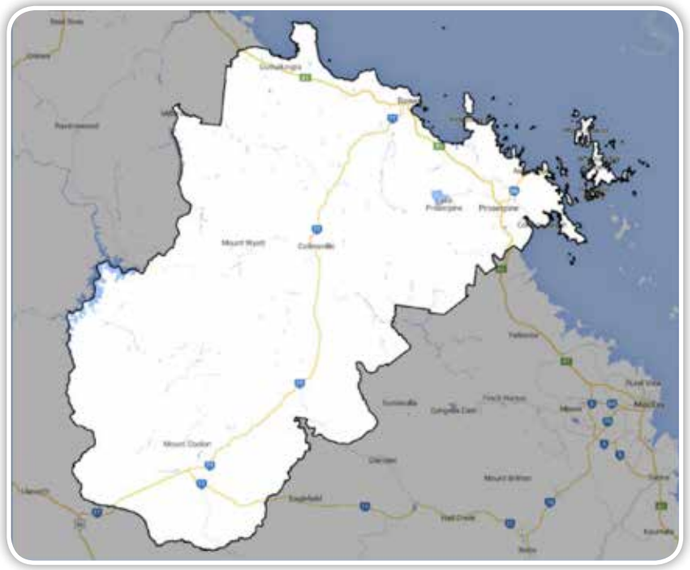


Figure 3. The Whitsunday Region *Source: Whitsunday Regional Council*

The strength of the region's tourism industry is reflected in the latest data which analyses employment by industry including 'tourism' as an amalgam of activities across various industry sectors including retail, accommodation, cafes and restaurants, cultural and recreational services and transport. The construction sector, which is one of the largest employers in the Whitsunday Region, includes elements of mining, tourism and lifestyle population growth, with the region having one of the fastest-growing populations in Queensland.

There are approximately 3,500 registered businesses operating in the region with the largest category being in the 'zero to $50,000 turnover' group. Small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are an important component of the region's economy. Non-employing businesses and 'micro-businesses' (those employing fewer than five staff) together account for 85% of businesses in the Whitsunday Region.

2.2 THE WHITSUNDAY REGION'S POPULATION

The Whitsunday Region has an estimated resident population (ERP) of approximately 34,300 (in 2016). The ERP is the official Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) measure of the population of areas in Australia according to a usual residence. The estimates for the region are based on local government area and statistical area level 2 (SA2) data sourced from the ABS. As illustrated below, the resident population of the Whitsunday Region has grown steadily since 2005 at an average annual rate of 1.49%. However, the region's rate of population increase has been below the State average rate of growth of 2.0% per annum over the same ten-year period.

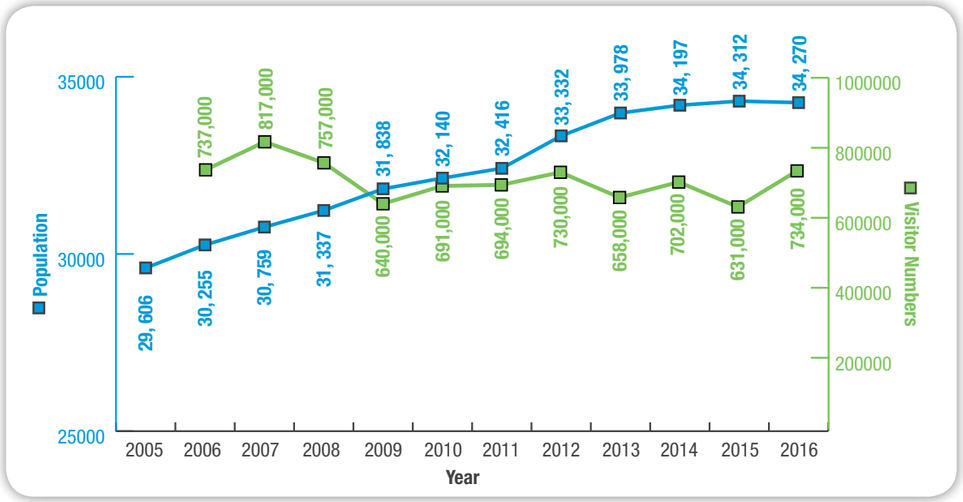


Figure 4. Population Trend, Whitsunday Region, 2005 to 2016
Source: Population - Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017
Visitor Numbers - Tourist & Events Queensland, 2017

Rates of population growth vary throughout the Whitsunday Region. According to the ABS, the Airlie-Whitsundays Statistical Area Level 2 SA2 (which includes Cannonvale) showed the strongest rate of population growth over the ten years to 2015 at an average annual increase of 2.6%. By comparison, Bowen's population increased at an average annual rate of 1.3% over the same period while Proserpine's increased by 1.2% per annum. Collinsville's population, on the other hand, has shown an average annual decline of 0.45% between 2005 and 2015.

2.3 THE WHITSUNDAY REGION'S LABOUR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS

According to data sourced from the Department of Employment, the Whitsunday Region has a labour force of 19,975. Between September 2015 and March 2017, the unemployment rate in the Whitsunday Region Local Government Area (LGA) declined steadily, from 10.5% in September 2015 to 6.5% in March 2017. This trend may be indicative of the region's recovery from the effects of the GFC and the mining industry downturn. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate in the Whitsunday Region remains higher than the State and national averages, with the comparable national unemployment rate at 5.7% and the Queensland rate at 6.2% in March 2017.

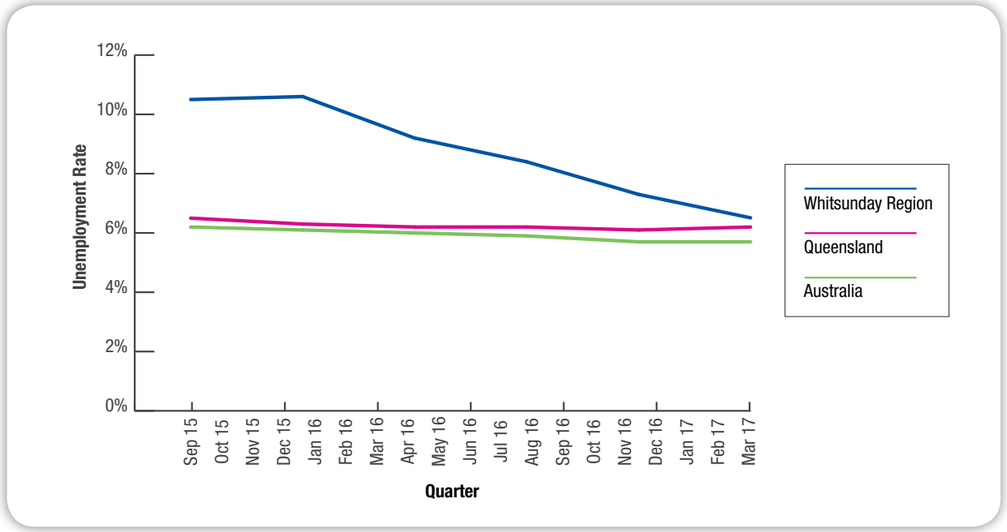


Figure 5. Unemployment Rates, Whitsunday Region, Queensland and Australia, September 2015 to March 2017 *Source: Department of Employment, March 2017*

Unemployment rates vary across the Whitsunday Region, reflecting varying social and economic circumstances. As at March 2017, the unemployment rate in the Airlie-Whitsundays Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2), which includes Cannonvale and Airlie Beach, was 5.2%. By comparison, the unemployment rate was 5.8% in Proserpine, 6.8% in Collinsville and 9% in Bowen.

2.4 EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY IN THE WHITSUNDAY REGION

The figure below illustrates the Whitsunday Region's profile of employment by industry (that is, the number of employees whose place of work is located within the Whitsunday LGA).1 The data is sourced from REMPLAN, which uses 2011 ABS Census Journey to Work data as a base and adjusts employment numbers to current estimates using the latest (2012/13) national input-output tables and June 2015 Gross State Product data.

Along with agriculture and mining, tourism is a pillar of the Whitsunday Region's economy and its largest employer. To better capture the true size and value of tourism, REMPLAN quantifies the tourism sector as a stand-alone industry.

The tourism industry is an amalgam of activities across various sectors including Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Services, Arts and Recreational Services and Transport, Postal and Warehousing. REMPLAN's Tourism Analysis Module estimates the total number of jobs and the value of tourism for the local economy and incorporates a 'Tourism Sector' into the output and employment data. As illustrated below, tourism (visitor expenditure) supports 17% of local (Whitsunday Region) jobs (compared to just 7% of jobs in Queensland).

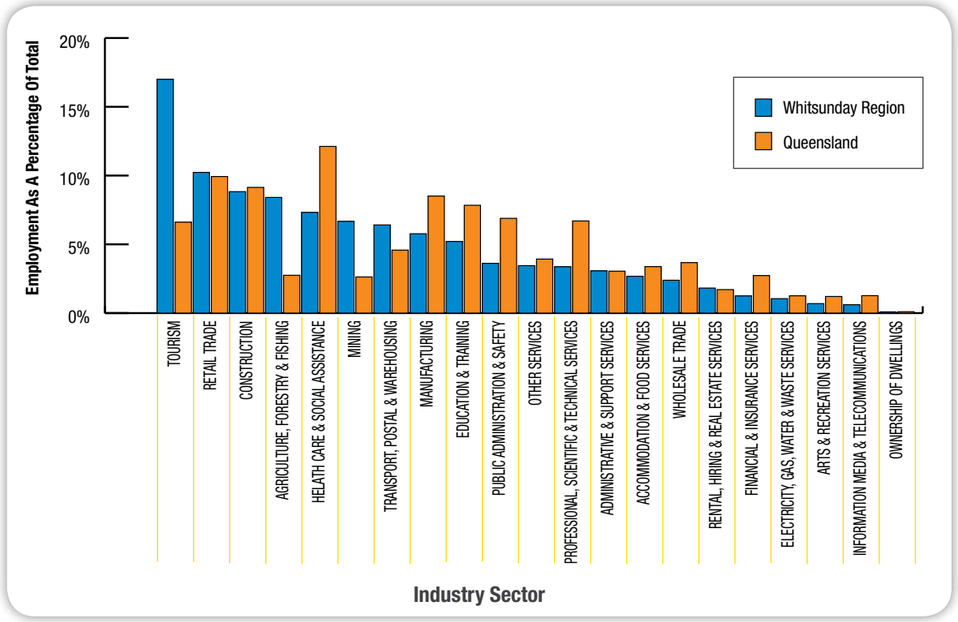


Figure 6. Employment by Industry, Whitsunday Region and Queensland

Source: REMPLAN, April 2016

The employment data presented in this report represents the number of people employed by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors in the Whitsunday Regional Council Local Government Area (the Whitsunday Region). The employment data is place of work data and represents total numbers of employees without any conversions to full-time equivalence. Retail jobs for instance represent typical employment profiles for that sector, i.e. some full time, some part time and some casual.

The Whitsunday Region's employment base is broad with agriculture, retail trade, health care and social assistance and construction also making large contributions. The level of employment self-containment in the Whitsunday Region is high, with 88% of people who work in the region living there too; about half of the remaining 12% of workers travel to work from surrounding areas in the Mackay, Burdekin and Isaac LGAs and from Townsville.

In the Whitsunday Region, 79% of local tourism employment is in Accommodation & Food Services, then Transport (8%), Retail Trade (6%) and Administrative & Support Services (3%). Of all Accommodation & Food Services jobs, 62% are related to accommodation, reflecting a stronger focus on serving visitors, relative to serving the residents.

The size of the Whitsunday Region's Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector as a proportion of local employment (8% of all jobs in the local economy), illustrates the significance of this industry when it is considered that across Queensland, this sector accounts for just 3% of all jobs. The largest sub-sector of employment is 'Other Agriculture'. Accounting for two-thirds of agricultural employment, this includes sugar cane farming and fruit growing. Other notable agricultural activities in the region (in terms of jobs) include sheep, grains, beef and dairy cattle.

Together with tourism and agriculture, mining has been a pillar of the Whitsunday Region's economy and despite the peaks and troughs characteristic of the resources sector, mining accounts for 7% of employment in the region compared to the Queensland average of just 2.5%. Because mining is a capital-intensive industry, the real value of this sector is evident in its contribution to the value of the Whitsunday Region's economic output.

2.5 INDUSTRY OUTPUT AND VALUE-ADDED

According to REMPLAN, the Whitsunday Region's total value of economic output, that is, gross revenue generated by businesses and organisations in the region, is estimated at approximately $4.8 billion which is almost 1% of the value of Queensland's total economic output. Mining, construction, manufacturing and tourism are the largest contributors to the Whitsunday Region's economic output. As shown below, collectively, these industries account for more than half (54%) of the region's economic output.

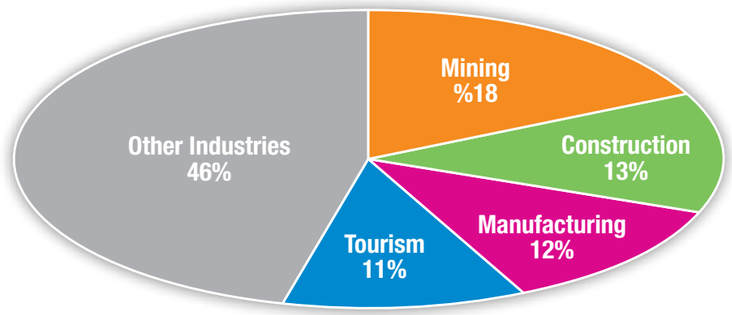


Figure 7. Whitsunday Region Industry Output: Key Sectors *Source: REMPLAN, April 2016*

The total value of the Whitsunday Region's tourism output is estimated at $535 million, which is 11% of the value of the region's total output. The REMPLAN modelling estimates that for each dollar spent by a tourist in the Whitsunday Region, $0.63 is spent on Accommodation & Food services, $0.14 on Transport, Postal and Warehousing, $0.12 on Ownership of Dwellings, $0.04 on Administrative and Support Services and $0.03 on Retail Trade.

The economic model also calculates industry value-added, which is the value that is added by industry sectors in the Whitsunday Region to intermediate inputs. Value-added is considered to be a better reflection of the strength or otherwise of a local or regional economy because it refers to only the value of output generated in the region less the cost of imported inputs such as the purchase of machinery and equipment and other non-labour inputs used in the production process.

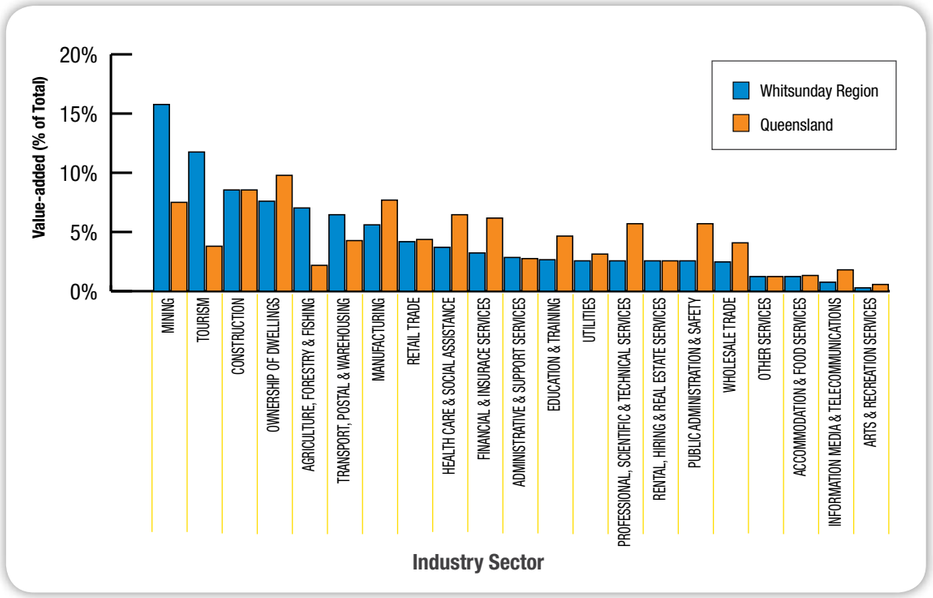


Figure 8. Value-Added by Industry, Whitsunday Region and Queensland

Source: : REMPLAN, April 2016

The total value-added estimate for The Whitsunday Region is $2.1 billion. The largest share of the region's industry value-added is attributable to Mining, which accounts for 17% of total value-added. Other notable contributors to the Whitsunday Region's value-added include Tourism (12% of total value-added), Construction (9%), Ownership of Dwellings (8%), Agriculture (7%) and Transport, Postal & Warehousing (7%). The Whitsunday Region's transport sector is dominated by activity in the Water, Pipeline and Other Transport sub-sector which has close links to both Mining and Tourism.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

2.6 INTER-REGIONAL EXPORTS

Economic modelling shows the value of goods and services produced by industry sectors in the Whitsunday Region that are sold to consumers, businesses, and governments based outside the region's boundaries, that is, outside the Whitsunday Region LGA.

This includes 'exports' to locations in other parts of Queensland, Australia and overseas. The total estimated value of regional exports for the Whitsunday Region is $42.3 million, which is 42% of the region's total economic output.

Mining (39%) and Manufacturing (15%) together generate over half (54%) of the Whitsunday Region's inter-regional exports. This reflects the strong export orientation of the resources sector and its significance as a contributor to regional economic output.

Other export-oriented industries in the Whitsunday Region include Accommodation & Food Services (14% of the value of the region's exports), Agriculture (10%), Transport, Postal and Warehousing (which is linked to both Tourism and Mining) (10%) and Construction (5%). The export strength of the region's construction industry can be attributed to its strong heavy and civil engineering construction sub-sector, which serves the mining and manufacturing industries in the wider North and Central Queensland regions.

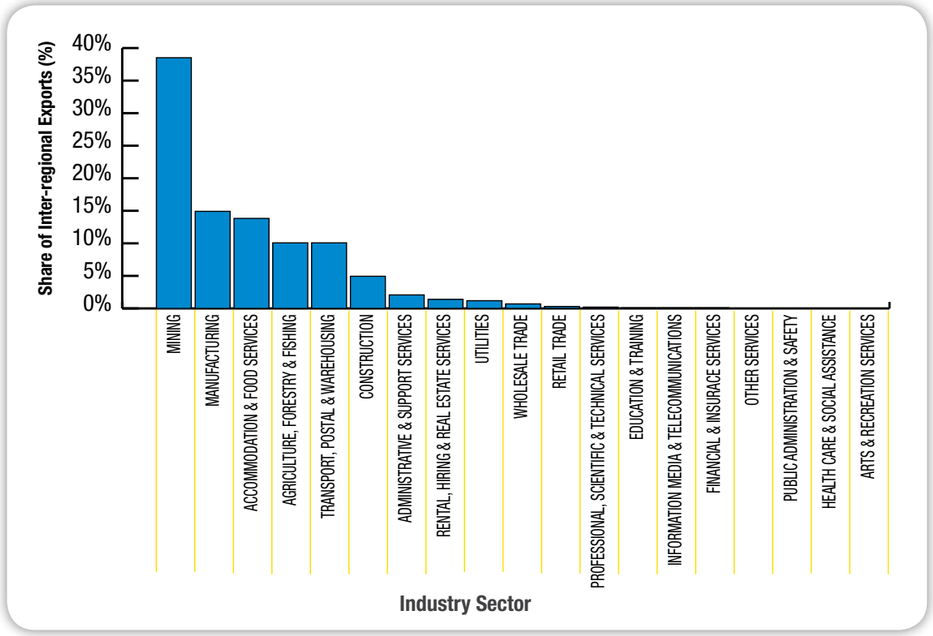


Figure 9. Inter-regional Exports by Industry, Whitsunday Region

Source: REMPLAN, April 2016

2.7 THE WHITSUNDAY REGION'S IMPORT REPLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Figure 10 shows the value of expenditure by industries in the Whitsunday Region by geographic location of purchase. In other words, for selected industries, it shows the amount businesses located in the Whitsunday Region collectively spend on goods and services which are either purchased from within the region, imported from elsewhere in Australia or imported from overseas, respectively. Only those industries which generate $150 million or more in total expenditure are shown in the chart.

The Whitsunday Region's mining industry (coal mining) has strong links to other sectors of the local economy through the purchases it makes for goods and services (inputs). Of the $500 million spent by the Whitsunday Region's mining industry on goods and services, over half (51%) is spent locally in the region, the remainder being spent elsewhere in Australia (49%) and a negligible amount (0.2%) spent overseas.

Manufacturing on the other hand spreads its input purchases fairly evenly between the Whitsunday Region (37%), elsewhere in Australia (31%) and from overseas suppliers (32%). A closer look at manufacturing industry sub-sectors in the Whitsunday Region shows that the industry's largest sector (Food Product Manufacturing) actually has a higher level of local spend relative to other manufacturing sub-sectors.

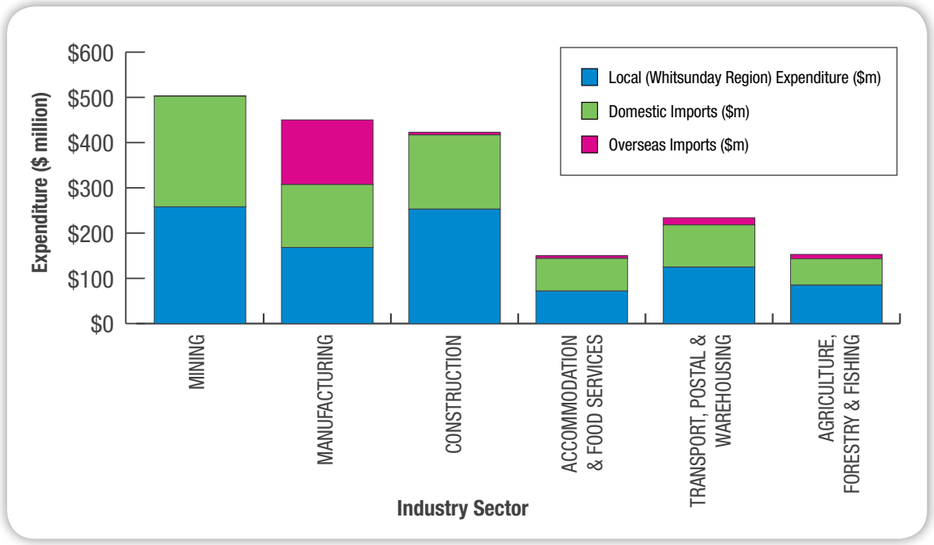


Figure 10. Selected Industry Expenditure Breakdown by Location, Whitsunday Region

Source: REMPLAN, April 2016 with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

The Whitsunday Region's Food Product Manufacturing sector - which is defined largely by its sugar processing capabilities - spends $175 million on goods and services. Of that, more than half (55%) is spent locally within the region, 27% on imports from the rest of Australia and 18% on overseas imports. Opportunities to continue to build on the Whitsunday Region's food processing capabilities warrant further attention.

The region's other key manufacturing sectors, including Metal Product Manufacturing, Basic Chemical, Cleaning & Polymer Manufacturing and Transport Equipment & Parts Manufacturing - all of which are linked to mining – source the majority of their inputs from elsewhere in Australia and overseas. This suggests there may be import replacement opportunities in the Whitsunday Region's mining and related manufacturing sectors.

Mining has strong links to the local economy

The local construction industry also sources the majority of its inputs (60%) locally (in the Whitsunday Region), with 39% of purchases made elsewhere in Australia. More than one-third (38%) of the Whitsunday Region's construction sector is focussed on heavy and civil engineering construction activities reflecting the industry's ties to mining and related activities in the Whitsunday Region and wider North and Central Queensland regions. Another one-third of construction industry activity is in construction services with the remainder in residential and non-residential building construction.

Of the $234 million spent by the Whitsunday Region's Accommodation & Food Services sector on goods and services, 31% is spent locally, the remainder being spent elsewhere in Australia (31%) or overseas (38%). The purchase of imports is driven in large part by the nature of inputs used in this sector. For example, furniture purchased to equip hotel and motel rooms would be sourced mainly from outside the region, as would many food and beverage products.

Figure 11. The Whitsunday Region's 'Driver' Industries

Source: REMPLAN, April 2016 with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

	Backward Linkages	Exports	Employment	Value Added
Mining	✓	✓		✓
Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tourism		✓	✓	✓
Agriculture		✓	✓	
Construction	✓		✓	✓

Other tourism industry inputs, such as booking services, much of which is now provided online from locations anywhere in the world, would also count as imported inputs to the local Accommodation & Food Services sector. This suggests there may be opportunities to replace these imports with locally supplied products and services such as food produce grown locally. The potential viability of this sort of opportunity requires further investigation.

2.8 THE WHITSUNDAY REGION'S ECONOMIC DRIVERS

The preceding analysis shows that those industry sectors which are the drivers of the Whitsunday Region's economy in terms of regional exports, employment, value-added and local expenditure on goods and services (linkages back into the local economy) are detailed below.

2.9 THE THREE 'PILLARS' OF THE WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL ECONOMY

The 'driver' industries of mining, tourism and agriculture are the three 'pillars' of the Whitsunday regional economy. The region's other key industries like manufacturing, transport services and construction are closely integrated with the three pillars through local supply chain links. Other population-driven industries like retail trade, personal services and key service sectors such as health and education, are directly and indirectly reliant on the three pillars and the other key driver sectors of the Whitsunday Regional Economy for their own sustainability and growth.

TOURISM

According to IBISWorld (2017), despite some challenges in recent years, including the global financial crisis, tourism in Australia has performed well and has strong prospects for growth. The Whitsunday Region has a healthy visitor economy serving diverse markets including families, backpackers, overseas visitors and the drive tourism market. The region is attractive to overseas visitors for its safe, clean and nature-based attributes and proximity to Asia. The Whitsunday Islands are regarded as the 'jewel in the crown' offering easy access to the Great Barrier Reef.

Tourism is the Whitsunday Region's largest employer, accounting for approximately 40% of jobs and it is the second-largest contributor to the region's industry value-added behind mining. There are opportunities to expand the tourism offer beyond the Whitsunday Islands and Airlie Beach to a broader land-based visitor experience, particularly targeting the domestic drive market.

There are also opportunities to build on the region's rich indigenous and European history and cultural heritage, industrial and agri-tourism, food tourism and nature-based experiences. Growing existing markets and capturing new opportunities for growth will require a co-ordinated approach to marketing, infrastructure provision and destination management.

Tourism – Whitsunday Region's largest employer

Agriculture - The wider Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Region produces 27% of Australia's sugarcane

AGRICULTURE

The Whitsunday horticultural sector is a significant contributor to the regional economy and to the Australian horticulture sector. The Bowen and Gumlu area has a well-established horticulture industry that provides a diversity of skilled and unskilled, permanent and casual employment opportunities.

The Whitsunday Region's horticulture industry supports 13 major crop varieties, including tomatoes, capsicum, beans and corn, and produces over 250,000 tonnes per annum. Vegetable and fruit production accounts for 17% of agricultural production in the Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Region (RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, 2016).

The Whitsunday Region's horticultural sector is presented with a number of opportunities for growth and development by leveraging growing domestic and international demand for fresh and processed fruit and vegetables. According to IBISWorld, demand is expected to continue its expansion over the next five years, boosted by increased vegetable consumption, health consciousness and vegetable prices. Intensifying competition from cheap processed imports will continue to challenge industry operators, while opportunities in emerging export markets will boost demand for fresh Australian produce.

Food product manufacturing, which is a driver of local industry output and exports in the Whitsunday Region, is underpinned by the strength of its sugarcane growing and processing sector. Nationally, the industry exports 80% of its processed sugar in volume terms and almost 50% in value terms. The wider Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Region produces 27% of Australia's sugarcane (RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, 2016).

The Proserpine sugarcane growing area is part of the Central Region Sugar Group with approximately 22,000 hectares of cane-growing land currently under cultivation across 215 farms. The Proserpine mill, owned by WILMAR, has a maximum crushing capacity of 24,000 to 25,000 hectares of cane, presenting scope for the region's sugar industry to grow. The raw sugar, once crushed at the mill, is transported via road and rail to the Port of Mackay for export.

Prospects for Australia's sugarcane industry are strong, with positive growth expected over the next five years. According to IBISWorld (2016), assuming average weather conditions, industry revenue is projected to post annualised growth of 3.2% over the five years to 2020-21. An expected rise in sugar consumption across many developing economies will help drive demand for sugar cane growers, and the anticipated weak Australian dollar will support export demand for Australian sugar.

The beef cattle industry accounts for 20% of the value of agricultural output in the Whitsunday Region and 25% of employment. It is the largest agricultural industry sub-sector in the wider Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Region where it accounts for 39% of the value of all agricultural industry output.

According to IBISWorld (2017), Australia's beef cattle industry's prospects are expected to strengthen over the next five years. Surging demand for Australian beef in overseas markets has been a major contributor to the industry's revenue growth, especially over the three years to 2015-16. Industry revenue is forecast to grow at an annualised 3.4% through 2021-22, to reach $16 billion. Increasing meat consumption arising from higher incomes in overseas markets is expected to boost industry demand.

Mining – the largest contributor to the Whitsunday Region's economic output

MINING

Mining is the largest contributor to the Whitsunday Region's economic output, worth $788 million or 18% of the region's total industry output. Coal mining accounts for the largest share of industry output, worth $753 million or 96% of the value of mining industry output (REMPLAN, April 2016).

Historically mining has provided the Whitsunday Region with income, employment, investment and infrastructure. The most recent mining industry downturn, around 2012, impacted the Whitsunday Region as a whole, but particularly the towns of Collinsville and Bowen. An important element of the region's comparative advantage is its geographic proximity to the key resource areas of the Bowen Basin and the emerging Galilee Basin.

According to IBISWorld (2016), mining in Australia remains in a decline phase of its economic lifecycle, following commodity pricing falls that were only partly offset by increased investment to expand production. Despite major year-to-year fluctuations, mining's share of total economic output is projected to remain relatively stable in the decade through 2020-21.

Over these years, the mining industry's value-added (the contribution to national GDP) is expected to decrease at a compound annual rate of 0.1%. This is in contrast to the projected compound annual growth rate of Australia's national GDP of 2.6% over the same period. This indicates that the contribution of mining to the overall economy will continue to fall.

Despite the industry's decline, mining remains the anchor of the Whitsunday Regional Economy and the sector will continue to be a significant employer and economic contributor into the future. In discussing the role of mining as a key industry for Australia's future prosperity, Deloitte (2014) conclude that the sheer size of the mining sector and its continuing potential will ensure it remains central to Australia's economy for many years to come.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

3. Economic Development Strategy Themes and Actions

3.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY THEMES

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 documents a plan of action for Council and its partners in government, the non-government sector, industry and the community to facilitate change towards a prosperous future for the Whitsunday Region.

The actions are informed by the economic development vision and Council's 'economic development charter'. Prioritising where Council's resources can best be directed for the purpose of facilitating and promoting the economic development of the region is a key consideration of the Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021.

The Strategy contains six strategy themes or 'action areas'. They are:

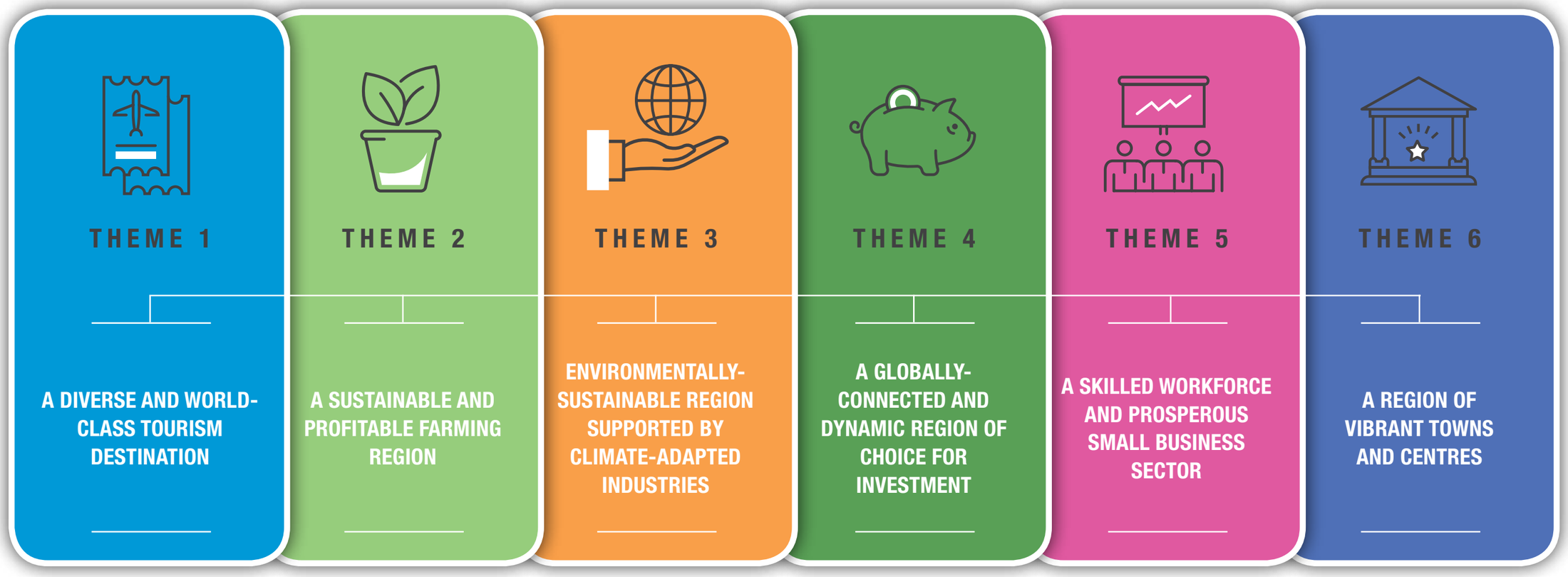


Figure 13. Economic Development Strategy Themes

Source: SC Lennon & Associates

A suite of 70 individual actions has been prepared and these are categorised under the six strategic themes accordingly. Each action area or theme includes:

- **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE** – this is a statement for each theme setting out what the target outcome is for that action area.
- **RATIONALE** – this is a statement providing a set of reasons and a logical basis for the course of action proposed.
- **ACTIONS** – these are the tasks to be carried out to realise the stated objective.
- **PERFORMANCE MEASURES** – these are suggested measures or key performance indicators (KPIs) particular to each action area that will be applied to monitor implementation progress over time.

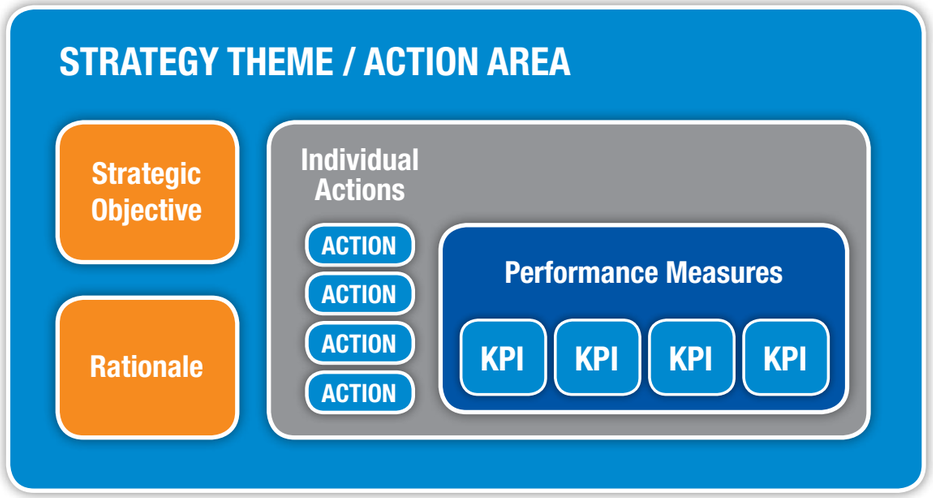


Figure 14. Economic Development Strategy Action Planning Framework
Source: SC Lennon & Associates

Actions are categorised as follows:

- **COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS:** These are actions that will involve specific tasks for Whitsunday Regional Council and an allocation of human, physical and financial resources. Action statements are to be sufficiently specific so that the desired outcome can be measured; and
- **COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS:** These are advocacy or support initiatives where the implementation of the actions is to be led by agencies other than Council.

The actions are further categorised according to whether they represent: 'catalyst project planning & development' which requires priority action combined with a well-planned course of project implementation for the desired outcomes to be realised; and 'strategic programming' that can be addressed as part of Council's day-to-day economic development planning and facilitation functions in a strategic and informed manner.

Each strategy theme is addressed in turn as follows.

THEME 1

A DIVERSE AND WORLD-CLASS TOURISM DESTINATION

Strategic Objective

Take a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to promotion and development to expand the Whitsunday Region's tourism offer with a depth and diversity of attractions and facilities and grow the market for coastal and land-based experiences that are unique to the region.

Theme 1: A Diverse and World-class Tourism Destination

RATIONALE

Tourism is one of the three pillars of the Whitsunday Region's economy. It is the region's largest employer, accounting for approximately 40% of jobs and it is the second-largest contributor to the region's industry value-added behind mining.

The Whitsunday Region has a healthy visitor economy serving diverse markets including families, backpackers, overseas visitors and the drive tourism market. The region is attractive to overseas visitors for its safe, clean and nature-based attributes and proximity to Asia. The Whitsunday Islands are regarded as the 'jewel in the crown' offering easy access to the Great Barrier Reef.

Opportunities exist to expand the tourism offer beyond the Whitsunday Islands and Airlie Beach to a broader land-based visitor experience, particularly targeting the domestic drive market. There are also opportunities to build on the Whitsunday Region's rich indigenous and European history and cultural heritage, industrial and agri-tourism, food tourism and nature-based experiences. Developing these opportunities will require investment in a greater diversity of visitor accommodation facilities and services.

Expanding the Whitsunday Region's Visitor Accommodation Offer

The Whitsunday Region arguably lacks a depth and diversity of accommodation to cater for a wide variety of visitor markets. In particular, the region needs more 4 to 5-star plus accommodation providing the highest quality hotel service, retail, recreational, leisure and entertainment facilities and restaurants. This sort of facility is lacking perhaps most notably on the mainland at Airlie Beach where serviced apartments are the most common form of short-stay accommodation and the backpacker market dominates.

Protecting and Enhancing the Whitsunday Islands Experience

The Whitsunday Islands represent just 1% of the Great Barrier Reef, yet in 2015-2016 it accounted for 44% of all reef tourism. Many sites, such as Whitehaven Beach, are already at capacity and this is impacting on the ability of operators to guarantee the promised Whitsundays quality experience. There is a need to develop new sites and additional infrastructure for visitors to the islands to take pressure off existing sites, protect the brand image and allow for growth in the market.

Developing the Whitsunday Brand

The Whitsundays is a relatively mature product. While the brand is strong domestically, there is scope to strengthen the region's brand recognition in international markets, particularly China. The islands and mainland could be adopting a stronger brand and stronger links to the Great Barrier Reef, which has worldwide recognition. The Whitsunday Region has a diversity of existing and potential tourism attractions and experiences. Each town and surrounding attractions could be promoted for their own unique offerings as part of a regional tourism experience.

Regional Tourism Co-operation, Collaboration and Co-ordination

Providing new facilities and accommodation, promoting the region's tourism offer, growing existing markets and capturing new opportunities for growth requires a co-ordinated approach to marketing, infrastructure provision and destination management - in the Whitsunday Region and also in the Greater Whitsunday-Isaac-Mackay Region. Key agencies in this process include Tourism Whitsunday, Bowen Tourism, tourism information centres, Whitsunday Regional Council and, most importantly, individual tourism operators and non-tourism businesses.

The Whitsundays will benefit most if it is strategically promoted as a 'region', incorporating its connectivity with the Greater Whitsunday Region, North Queensland and the rest of the State.

It is particularly important that operators and key tourist contact points, such as the visitor information centres, have a broader knowledge of what is available for visitors to the wider region and beyond and that they pro-actively cross-promote opportunities for visitors to diversify their experiences and spend longer in the Whitsunday Region and beyond.

COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

1.1 Facilitate the opportunity to develop a mixed-use 5-star hotel and entertainment precinct at Airlie Beach as part of the Airlie Foreshore Masterplan.

1.2 Prepare a business case outlining the potential for the Bowen Marina site to include a marine services hub (including services for Super Yachts) to complement infrastructure at Airlie Beach and to provide additional capacity in the Whitsunday Region.

1.3 Prepare a concept plan and a business case to develop a regional food produce and tourist centre in the Bowen area to showcase the Whitsunday region's quality produce and its emerging 'food culture'. Subject to the findings of the business case, call for expressions of interest (EOIs) to develop a 'Whitsunday Regional Food & Tourism Centre'.

1.4 Prepare a Recreational Vehicle (RV) Tourism Development Plan and policy statement to assist community efforts to establish appropriate spaces and facilities for RV travellers in the Bowen, Collinsville and Proserpine areas.

1.5 Audit existing community festivals and events (including sporting, music and cultural festivals) and identify opportunities for existing and emerging events throughout the region to become part of a coordinated calendar of events with Tourism Whitsundays.

Strategic Programming

1.6 Work with Tourism Whitsundays to review the effectiveness of current management and funding arrangements for visitor information centres (VICs) in the Whitsunday Region.

1.7 Work with staff and volunteers from VICs and other visitor information points to build their knowledge-base and capacity to cross-promote towns and whole-of-region visitor products.

1.8 Review Council policies for the northern part of the Whitsunday Region to ensure they support development of this area as a focal point for tourism and recreation.

1.9 Work with Tourism Whitsundays and local chambers of commerce to develop and promote a customer service strategy / campaign for the Whitsunday Region, targeting both traditional and non-traditional tourism businesses, to facilitate a consistent, quality visitor experience.

1.10 Provide support and intelligence to Whitsunday Regional Council's communications team on a regular basis to ensure key tourism-related promotion and marketing messages are considered in Council's corporate communications.

COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

1.11 Work with Tourism Whitsundays to develop and resource a joint program to facilitate land-based tourism product development across the Whitsunday Region.

1.12 Advocate for the Daydream Island and South Molle Island redevelopments.

Strategic Programming

1.13 Work with Tourism Whitsundays, local operators and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to identify and implement infrastructure projects aimed at increasing the capacity of the Whitsunday Islands to sustainably manage existing and future visitor demand and visitor expectations of the Whitsunday Islands experience.

1.14 Work with Tourism Whitsundays on a coordinated approach to marketing the individual identities of the region's townships under the overarching Tourism Whitsunday brand.

1.15 Engage with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on matters regarding efficient and effective tourist visa application procedures in support of tourism development in the Whitsunday Region.

Performance Measures

- Increased average length of stay by domestic visitors to the Whitsunday Region from 4 nights to 6 nights, by 2021.
- Increased average length of stay by international visitors to the Whitsunday Region from 7 nights to 10 nights, by 2021.
- A 10 per cent annual increase in the tourism sector's contribution to the Whitsunday Region's gross regional product (GRP), from approximately $540 million in 2017 to $875 million in 2021.
- Increased employment in the Whitsunday Region's tourism sector, from approximately 2,350 jobs in 2017 to 2,750 jobs by 2021.
- An increase in the number of land-based tourism products and activities throughout the Whitsunday Region by 2021.
- A 5-star hotel and entertainment precinct operational at Airlie Beach by 2021.

THEME 2

A SUSTAINABLE AND PROFITABLE FARMING REGION

Strategic Objective

Capitalise on the Whitsunday Region's traditional strengths in sugar production, beef cattle and horticulture to value-add and develop existing and new markets in Australia and overseas.

Theme 2: A Sustainable and Profitable Farming Region

RATIONALE

The agricultural sector is a traditional economic mainstay of the Whitsunday Region based primarily on sugar cane growing and processing (the Whitsundays is the fifth-largest sugar producing region in Queensland), and fruit and vegetable production. It also includes beef cattle production. These activities make a strong contribution to the Whitsunday Region's output, export and employment profile. The Whitsunday Region also has a small fishing and aquaculture industry which present opportunities for growth.

Growing the Whitsunday Region's Horticultural Sector

The Whitsunday horticultural sector is a significant contributor to the regional economy and to the Australian horticulture sector. The Bowen and Gumlu area has a well-established horticulture industry that provides a diversity of skilled and unskilled, permanent and casual employment opportunities.

The Whitsunday Region's horticulture industry supports 13 major crop varieties, including tomatoes, capsicum, beans and corn, and produces over 250,000 tonnes per annum. Vegetable and fruit production accounts for 17% of agricultural production in the Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Region (RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, 2016). The region's horticultural sector must address some challenges if it is to grow and prosper including: water security; bio-security; climate change impacts; and potential environmental impacts on the Great Barrier Reef and the region's fisheries. Workforce planning is a challenge for the industry and there are opportunities to explore the development of an agricultural education and training hub in the Whitsunday Region.

The industry is also presented with a number of opportunities for growth and development by leveraging domestic and international demand for fresh and processed fruit and vegetables. Value-adding will be central to the industry's future success in capturing export markets and opportunities to establish food processing facilities in the Whitsunday Region are being explored.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

Supporting Sugar Industry Value-adding Opportunities

Food product manufacturing, which is a driver of local industry output and exports in the Whitsunday Region, is underpinned by the strength of its sugarcane growing and processing sector. Nationally, the industry exports 80% of its processed sugar in volume terms and almost 50% in value terms. The wider Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Region produces 27% of Australia's sugarcane (RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, 2016).

Horizontal expansion of the sugar industry is primarily governed by land and water. Vertical expansion, that is, increasing yields on existing farms, could be achieved through a focus on controlling pests and disease and through climate adaptation initiatives. The industry has opportunities to value add to existing product, particularly through the development of biofuels. The Queensland Government's Bio-futures Program aims to establish a $1 billion sustainable export-oriented industrial biotechnology and bio-products sector in Queensland over the next 10 years.

Managing environmental impacts on the Great Barrier Reef and maintaining relationships with communities and the tourism sector are critical to the industry's long-term viability and community acceptance. Workforce planning and farm succession planning are ongoing challenges for the Whitsunday Region's sugarcane industry.

Growing the Whitsunday Region's Beef Product Markets

The beef cattle industry accounts for 20% of the value of agricultural output in the Whitsunday Region and 25% of employment. It is the largest agricultural industry sub-sector in the wider Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday Region where it accounts for 39% of the value of all agricultural industry output. Overseas demand for Australia's beef cattle, including organic beef and live cattle, means prospects for growth are very strong.

There are opportunities to tap into new markets including organic beef and live cattle exports, and growing demand for breeding cattle in China. Whitsunday Regional Council can help regional growers to collaborate to pursue export market development opportunities. Moving forward, there are some strategic transport infrastructure limitations that need attention and managing environmental impacts (weeds) and opportunities for new pastures should continue to be explored as a priority.

COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

2.1 Support the completion of the Urannah Dam feasibility study being undertaken by Bowen Collinsville Enterprise (BCE). Dependent on the outcome of the feasibility study, conduct a quadruple bottom line cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of the Urannah Dam and 'Water for Bowen' projects. Establish a clear policy position on infrastructure delivery for long-term water security for the Whitsunday Region and proceed with project implementation.

2.2 Support the development of a concept plan and business case for the Bowen food processing plant. On the basis that the business case is proven, facilitate with project implementation.

2.3 Work with graziers to identify strategic transport infrastructure needs for the Whitsunday Region's grazing industry and prepare business cases for the delivery of priority transport infrastructure. Engage with the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Transport and Infrastructure Council to have priority projects included in the Regional Transport Plan and the Remote and Regional Transport Strategy.

2.4 Support initiatives to deliver improved water security in the region which will allow land to be opened up for increased farming production in alternative and diverse crops.

Strategic Programming

2.5 Work with industry stakeholders in Bowen's horticultural sector to develop a strategy to 'brand' and effectively develop Bowen and the Whitsunday Region as a premier grower and supplier of premium food.

2.6 Finalise and implement the Draft Whitsunday Regional Biosecurity Plan 2016-2020.

COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS

Strategic Programming

2.7 Develop a working relationship with the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association to address key challenges and opportunities for the horticultural sector, including market development (domestic and international certification), workforce development, technological innovation and agri-tourism. Formally recognise and promote this relationship through a documented memorandum of understanding (MOU).

2.8 Initiate a collaborative project with the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association and Trade and Investment Queensland to support the participation of growers in strategically targeted international trade missions.

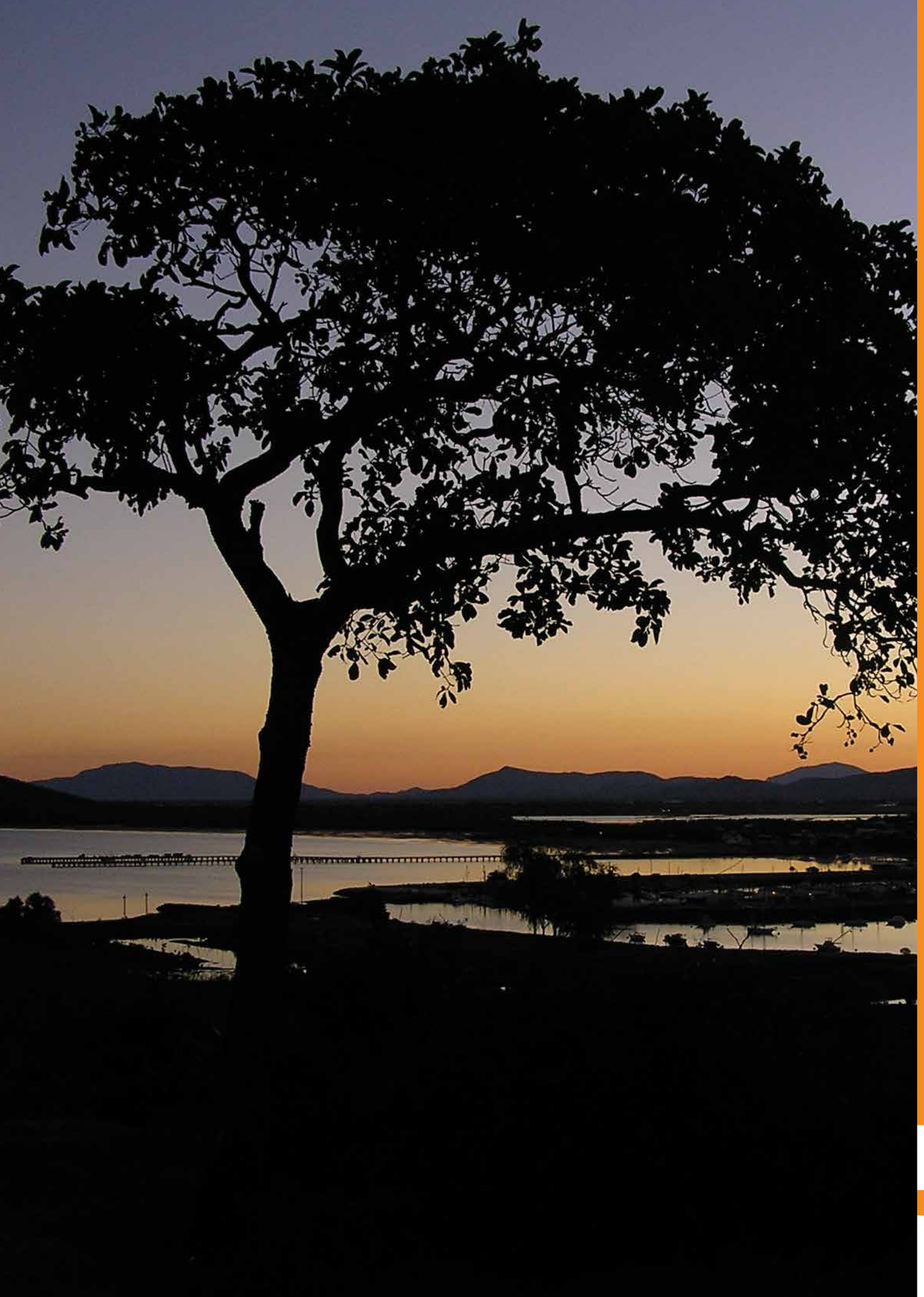
2.9 Collaborate with the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association, the Bowen Chamber of Commerce, Department of State Development and TAFE North Queensland to progress the opportunity to establish Bowen TAFE as a campus for international studies in horticulture and English.

2.10 Continue to meet regularly with the Canegrowers Association to discuss and plan the sustainable development of the sugar industry, including: land use planning and buffers; water security; environmental management; community engagement; workforce planning; biofuels; and other value-adding opportunities.

2.11 Initiate a process to collaborate with farmers, the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association, the Canegrowers Association and Tourism Whitsundays to identify opportunities for and develop strategies to create a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to agri-tourism in the Whitsunday Region.

Performance Measures

- Completion of the Urannah Dam feasibility study.
- Successful participation of the Whitsunday Region in international trade missions.
- Establishment of Bowen TAFE as a campus for international studies in horticulture and English by 2021.
- Formal recognition at the State and national levels of the Whitsunday Region's agricultural industry's transport infrastructure priorities.
- An increase in the number of the Whitsunday Region's agricultural enterprises engaged in processing activities.
- A 12 per cent increase in the agricultural sector's contribution to the Whitsunday Region's industry value-added, from $89 million to $100 million by 2021.



THEME 3

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-SUSTAINABLE REGION SUPPORTED BY CLIMATE-ADAPTED INDUSTRIES

Strategic Objective

Support a healthy and liveable natural environment for everyone in the Whitsunday Region to enjoy by providing means to encourage and support climate-adapted industries as key contributors to the region's economic development.

Theme 3: An Environmentally-Sustainable Region Supported by Climate-Adapted Industries

RATIONALE

The Whitsunday Region is exposed to a number of natural hazards, all of which are likely to be exacerbated by climate change. These direct hazards include tropical cyclones, extreme storms, landslides, riverine flooding, coastal erosion, heatwaves and bushfires.

Climate change predictions indicate that, in the future, the region can expect higher temperatures, rising sea levels and less frequent but more intense tropical cyclones, among other effects. Adapting to environmental change is a challenge for the Whitsunday Region's core industries, including agriculture (sugar cane, horticulture, grazing) and tourism.

Whitsunday Regional Council's Climate Change Adaptation Policy aims to:

- Support long term financial planning, asset management, strategic planning, emergency management and other Council processes with consistent, timely and scientifically sound information related to climate change;
- Ensure climate change adaptation is a core component of planning for a more resilient Whitsunday Region and is therefore mainstreamed into council's functions and activities; and
- Ensure Whitsunday Regional Council is well placed to benefit from economic development opportunities that may eventuate due to its proactive climate change adaptation and community resilience commitment.

Supporting Innovation with New Technologies including Alternative Energy

Building on the work of Whitsunday Regional Council through its Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy, there is scope to explore opportunities to 'incubate' innovation in the region's existing industries (e.g. mining, agriculture, tourism) using green technologies and climate change adaptation strategies. Whitsunday Regional Council can work with the State Government to explore the concept of an innovation hub for climate adaptation.

There is also an opportunity to explore and promote alternative energy generation in the Whitsunday Region.

COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Development

3.1 Work with the State Government to explore the concept of an innovation hub for climate adaptation, including opportunities for education and training utilising existing TAFE facilities at Cannonvale.

Strategic Programming

3.2 Establish a whole-of-Council policy and planning position on renewable energy in the Whitsunday Region.

COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS

Strategic Programming

3.3 Support the implementation of the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac (MWI) Climate Sustainability Plan.

Performance Measures

- Implementation of the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac (MWI) Climate Sustainability Plan.
- Increased investment in renewable energy in the Whitsunday Region.
- First innovation hub established in the Whitsunday Region and operational in 2018.

THEME 4

A GLOBALLY-CONNECTED AND DYNAMIC REGION OF CHOICE FOR INVESTMENT

Strategic Objective

Establish and continually promote the Whitsunday Region as a globally-connected region of choice for investment, supported by 'best-in-class' strategic infrastructure including transport, communications, water and energy.

Theme 4: A Globally-connected and Dynamic Region of Choice for Investment

RATIONALE

Investment is fundamental to economic development, and access to international, national and regional markets is a key determinant of long-term economic growth. This includes access to trading partners throughout Australia and overseas, to clients and to labour. Investment attraction is an important component of the Whitsunday Region's capacity to enhance its local industry and employment base. Strategically targeted new businesses - that can meet a particular market need and link in with the existing industrial make-up - can contribute substantially to regional economic growth and development.

The role of Whitsunday Regional Council is to help facilitate investment by promoting what the region has to offer prospective investors. This includes the critical 'enablers' of economic development, including strategic physical infrastructure like transport and communications, power and water.

Enhancing the Whitsunday Region's Road Network

The Whitsunday Region's identified road infrastructure priorities include: access to the Whitsunday Coast Airport; access to the Abbot Point Port; and building disaster resilience for the region's road network, particularly in light of the impacts of Cyclone Debbie in March 2017. For State and Federal-controlled road infrastructure priorities, Whitsunday Regional Council has a role in advocacy and providing collaborative support where it can.

Whitsunday Coast Airport – A Global Gateway

The Whitsunday Coast Airport 2016 Strategic Plan envisages an airport upgrade with $40 million invested in domestic capital works from 2016. This infrastructure is seen as enabling the airport and the economy of the Whitsunday Region to grow. There is an opportunity to investigate the potential for locating aviation-related industry around the airport such as aviation training and helicopter sales showrooms. Council's vision is for the 'Whitsunday Trade Coast', a name Council has registered, to be recognised as a multi-nodal transport hub with an international airport, adjacent standard rail gauge and the National Highway for logistics.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

Building the Capacity of the Whitsunday Region's Ports and Harbours

Marine-based economic activity is an important feature of the Whitsunday Region's economy. There is potential for the Bowen Marina site to be developed to provide additional capacity in the region. This could include services for Super Yachts and slipway facilities to cater for the boat and yacht maintenance industry. For the Whitsunday Region's tourism industry to grow, a market-driven multi-use Shute Harbour is required. This would be capable of supporting the local fishing industry as well as providing access to the Whitsunday Islands, allowing for the continued development of visitor markets such as island day tours from the mainland.

The State Development Area at Abbot Point offers potential for large-scale industrial development, with its deep-water port facility and proximity to transport links such as the Bruce Highway and rail infrastructure.

A lack of secure water supply is an issue which has a bearing on the sustainability of agriculture and the capacity of the Whitsunday Region to grow its industrial sector. Security of water supply, as a critical enabler underpinning the potential growth of the region's driver industries in mining and agriculture, is a priority for economic development.

Supporting Industry Innovation with World-class Digital Communications

The emergence of the digital economy has increased the propensity for individuals and businesses to interact and trade with suppliers, partners and customers through information and communications technologies. Whitsunday Regional Council can take the lead in initiating activities to help local businesses better understand and embrace the use of digital technologies for the benefit of their businesses and the communities they serve.

The National Broadband Network (NBN) is in the process of being rolled out through the Whitsunday Region. Council has an important role in identifying service shortcoming and advocating for improved telecommunications across the Whitsunday Region. It can also play a role in facilitating business access to new technologies. There is an opportunity to build on the work of the Whitsunday ROC and the emerging work of the Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3) to build the Whitsunday Region's digital capacity, including local businesses.

A Strategic and Co-ordinated Approach to Investment Attraction

As a co-ordinator of economic development, Whitsunday Regional Council can take the lead working with government departments and investment and trade organisations to formalise a protocol for receiving and facilitating investment enquiries. An investment prospectus needs to be prepared that clearly articulates the vision for the Whitsunday Region and identifies investment-ready opportunities that Council can play a lead role in developing.

COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

4.1 Take the lead in partnering with the Department of State Development to identify and plan for strategic development sites throughout the Whitsunday Region, aligning priorities with the State Government's economic development agenda, including Building our Regions. Prepare business cases and master plans as required to inform and structure investment proposals and funding applications. Examples include: redundant industrial sites (e.g. Bowen Coke Works); sites ready for re-vitalisation or re-development, particularly in light of the impacts of Cyclone Debbie (e.g. Bowen Marina, Bowen Jetty, Shute Harbour); and strategically located government-owned vacant land.

4.2 Implement the Whitsunday Coast Airport Strategic Plan 2016-2021.

Strategic Programming

4.3 Collaborate with the Department of State Development, RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday and Trade & Investment Queensland to prepare and publish a Whitsunday Region investor prospectus targeting selected industries and occupations that are aligned with our economic development vision to help diversify and grow the region's industrial base.

4.4 Work with the Department of State Development, Trade & Investment Queensland, RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, Austrade, the Regional Organisation of Councils and Greater Whitsunday Alliance to establish an investment enquiry protocol for the Whitsunday Region. The protocol should clearly articulate roles, responsibilities and processes for managing and registering investment enquiries.

4.5 Design and implement cultural awareness training for Councillors and key Council staff to support Whitsunday Regional Council's capacity to develop business relationships with potential investment and trading partners such as China and India.

4.6 Establish and maintain a published register of commercial / industrial land for the information of prospective investors including details of all commercial / industrial land in the Whitsunday Region, its location, zoning, dimensions, current status (i.e. use – industrial, commercial, retail, office, vacant) and relevant qualitative features.

4.7 To supplement Council's business investment promotion strategy, prepare a prospectus and pro-actively engage with government to promote the Whitsunday Regional Council area as a location for State and Federal government services (government departments) on the basis of the region's locational and lifestyle advantages.

COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

4.8 Work with the Department of State Development to identify a long-term solution for the supply of water to the State Development Area at Abbot Point.

4.9 Work with the Department of Transport and Main Roads for the prioritisation of key regional roads in the Regional Transport Plan and the Whitsunday Regional Council Local Recovery Plan, including: access to the Port of Abbot Point; access to the Whitsunday Coast Airport; access to the Galilee Basin; improvements to Shute Harbour Road; and implementation of the Bruce Highway Action Plan.

Strategic Programming

4.10 Work with the Regional Organisation of Councils to develop business cases to address priority mobile blackspot areas in the Whitsunday Region.

Performance Measures

- An investor prospectus completed and published (in print and online) by July 2018.
- A 25 per cent increase in investment enquiries to Whitsunday Regional Council by July 2018.
- Implementation of the Whitsunday Coast Airport Strategic Plan.

THEME 5

A SKILLED WORKFORCE AND PROSPEROUS MINING AND SMALL BUSINESS SECTOR

Strategic Objective

Collaborate with industry, the education and training sector and other tiers of government to enhance the Whitsunday Region's skills base and to support innovative, productive and prosperous small businesses throughout the region.

Theme 5: A Skilled Workforce and Prosperous Mining and Small Business Sector

RATIONALE

Economic development requires the symbiotic relationship between capital (investment) and labour (human capital) to be nurtured and developed over time. The injection of new capital (investment) is a key driver of economic development and jobs growth. However, a strategy which aims to enhance the level of investment in a particular area, must be framed to look beyond mere industry attraction.

Local enterprise also presents opportunities for new investment, and a successful investment enhancement strategy will be one that encourages additional investment from business and industry already located in the Whitsunday Region.

Mining is the Whitsunday Region's principal economic driver accounting for by far the largest share of the region's industry output, value-added and exports. The mining industry's linkages through other sectors in the local economy are strong. This presents opportunities to capitalise on this strength and continue to grow local mining industry capabilities, offering potential income and employment flow-on benefits to the rest of the regional economy. Mining will continue to be a driver of wealth in the Whitsunday Region with a significant share of local industry activity directly or indirectly dependent on the prosperity of the resources sector.

Whitsunday Regional Council, as a facilitator and promoter of economic development, will promote a 'can-do' attitude to support development of local business infrastructure for retail, industrial and community facilities. As the Whitsunday Region's economy develops over time, it will require ongoing business establishment, growth and investment to be sustained. Council has a key role to play to facilitate and support the process of investment and business establishment and growth, particularly in the small business sector including retail and business services.

The Whitsunday Region's human capital (labour) is the stock of its knowledge, expertise and abilities. It is one of the most important inputs to economic activity because it is crucial to supporting local businesses to be competitive and drive economic growth. Businesses need access to workers with appropriate skills, and access to skilled labour is influenced by the availability of education and training, levels of workforce participation and the mobility and flexibility of labour. An appropriately skilled and educated workforce can help the Whitsunday Region take advantage of new opportunities, overcome challenges and make the region more attractive to investment.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

Effective Delivery of Business Information and Referral Services

Whitsunday Regional Council is well-positioned to facilitate new business investment with readily-available information on the status of the regional economy, industry trends and prospects and locations for investment, including the availability of commercial and industrial land. Council can also help to facilitate the development of business start-ups and small to medium-sized businesses in the region by identifying and keeping abreast of business assistance programs on offer from State and Federal Government agencies.

Workforce Planning and Development

Workforce planning is essential for facilitating improvements in a region's human capital, which can enhance the innovative and productive capacity of the local workforce, making the Whitsunday Region more attractive to prospective investors. The development of a skilled and adaptable workforce is critical to the future success of the Whitsunday region's driver industries as well as emerging sectors.

Local Mining Sector Supply Chain Opportunities

In the lead-up to and during the operations phase of mining projects, employment and supply chain opportunities may exist for local communities in the Whitsunday Region. Key potential opportunities for communities at this stage arise from local employment and local content (business and industry) strategies. Opportunities might include, for example, the provision of mining services (technical or professional services), maintenance, catering and land management advice. Opportunities may differ between the construction and operations phases of a major project, as supply chain requirements are different in these two periods.

Addressing the Mining Sector's Education and Training Priorities

The mining sector is in a period of recovery with substantial growth anticipated over the next five years. With the Adani Carmichael Coal Mine project set to generate thousands of jobs in the region, there is an opportunity to develop local training initiatives, activities and facilities such as a skills centre of excellence to enable workforce development. The critical role of human capital means the requirements of industry must continue to be addressed and monitored as part of the regional economic development strategy for the Whitsundays. As a co-ordinator and facilitator of economic development, Council can play an active role, working with the education and training sector, and industry, to identify and address priorities.

COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS

Strategic Programming

5.1 Support the development of programs to increase home-based and micro-business capacity-building and innovation throughout the Whitsunday Region. Provide information and referrals to existing business development and/or mentoring programs or networks available through the Department of State Development.

5.2 Investigate the establishment of a Council-administered business start-up grants program targeting small business growth opportunities in the Whitsunday Region.

5.3 Promote and facilitate local small business access to Australian Government export market development programs through Austrade; host a series of local exporters' forums throughout the Whitsunday Region to promote opportunities in key sectors and markets.

5.4 Establish and maintain a register of business support and business investment enquiries to Whitsunday Regional Council.

5.5 Develop a 'Doing Business in the Whitsundays' prospectus with information for local businesses on how to access information and support covering topics such as: local business regulations; Council-administered business information and support services; key contacts such as local chambers of commerce; and information on business support available through the Department of State Development, RDA Mackay-Whitsunday Isaac, AusIndustry and other agencies.

5.6 Develop a local content policy and operational guidance to support opportunities for small business to participate in Council's procurement processes.

5.7 Undertake a regular (bi-annual) 'Whitsunday Region business needs and issues survey' and prepare a report for Council and relevant stakeholders, that summarises concerns and needs identified by local business; report back to business on Council's response and undertake supplementary investigations on verified priority issues.

5.8 Continue with the Mayor's bi-annual Business and Commerce Forum.

COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS

Strategic Programming

5.9 Work with the Whitsunday Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC) and local chambers of commerce to extend current Mackay based small business / start up programs and networks to the Whitsunday Regional Council area, including: Digital Economy Strategy; Split Spaces Mackay; Start-up Mackay; Mackay IT Network; and Young Professionals.

5.10 In partnership with RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, support and promote activities that advance the transition of businesses to optimise use of technology and take advantage of the region's digital capabilities including NBN connectivity as it is rolled out.

5.11 In partnership with the Greater Whitsunday Alliance, undertake a review of the findings from The Rural Futures Project (2012) and The Central Queensland Workforce Development Initiative (2012). Build on these findings to develop an updated strategy for workforce development across the GW3 region.

5.12 Working with local chambers and business associations and the Department of State Development, provide the networking forums and co-ordinate activities to help build the capacity of local businesses to potentially provide goods and services to the region's mining companies and associated supply chains.

5.13 Work with Adani to gain an understanding of workforce requirements for the planned Adani Carmichael Coal Mine Rail and Port project; map skills requirements against existing training available in the Whitsunday Region and identify opportunities for additional training programs to support local employment opportunities.

5.14 Work with Adani to develop a trade training centre in Collinsville, along with an incubation centre which supports small subcontractors to set up a base to service the mine during construction and operations.

5.15 In conjunction with local chambers and business associations and education and training providers such as Bowen TAFE, prepare and implement a strategy to help build the capacity of residents to participate in the resources sector workforce as the Galilee Basin develops.

Performance Measures

- An increase in the number of business support and business investment enquiries to Whitsunday Regional Council in 2017/18.
- A Whitsunday Region exporters forum series held during the 2017/18 Financial Year.
- A 10 per cent increase in the number of business start-ups in the Whitsunday Region over the five-year period to 2021.

THEME 6

A REGION OF VIBRANT TOWNS AND CENTRES

Strategic Objective

Support the sustainable development of the Whitsunday Region's towns and activity centres by providing all communities with vibrant and prosperous places to access employment, retail goods and services and essential community services and facilities.

Theme 6: A Region of Vibrant Towns and Centres

RATIONALE

Central to an effective investment attraction strategy is ensuring the Whitsunday Region offers an attractive business environment and, importantly, an attractive 'people environment'. When considering a new location to start-up or expand a business, the business proponents and their staff will consider, first and foremost, the quality of things like local schools and community services, recreational services and facilities, retail facilities and cultural facilities and attractions.

Providing Places for Employment

Regions where liveability is compromised find it difficult to attract entrepreneurs who have choices about where they run a business or invest. Those regions that do offer (and importantly, articulate) a 'liveability advantage' are more likely to attract and retain people and investment.

Cities and regions that are successful in attracting people and business do so based on a number of key factors including a clearly defined identity. This is recognised in a recent report by KPMG (2016) on 'magnet cities' and the principles which underpin their success.

The Whitsunday Region offers a safe and affordable lifestyle with a range of services and facilities and good connections to Brisbane and beyond. Council's efforts to promote and attract business investment and employment creation must build on these attributes.

Magnet cities (and regions) are also well-connected, both physically and functionally, to other cities and regions, they have the infrastructure and services to attract and retain youth and new wealth and they are good at cultivating new ideas. These are principles the Whitsunday Region can aspire to.

Competitively-priced and well-serviced employment land is a key enabler of business investment, employment creation and economic development. There is an opportunity for Whitsunday Regional Council to facilitate the development of strategic parcels of land / potential catalyst developments with strategic economic development benefits for the region. The Whitsunday Coast Airport is a strategic asset which Council can leverage to facilitate more economic activity in the region. There is an opportunity to investigate the potential for an industrial precinct at the airport. Whitsunday Regional Council has recognised this by registering the 'Whitsunday Trade Coast' name in preparation for development at and around the airport.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021

Providing Places for People

Whitsunday Regional Council is preparing a master plan for the Proserpine town centre and is progressing the 'Greening & Growing Bowen' project. A Collinsville Redevelopment Master Plan has also been prepared. Collinsville has recently become a RV-friendly town and as such the main focus of development is to encourage tourism within the area through the establishment of an attractive RV designated space and the addition of new attractions to entice visitors through the town.

There are two large sites at the Port of Airlie with strategic development potential. A mixed-use development serving locals and visitors and including the mooted 5-star hotel and entertainment facilities including a new cinema for example, would provide a stimulus for the local and regional economies, adding depth and diversity to the region's lifestyle appeal and its tourism offer.

Sustainable Mining Towns

With the Adani Carmichael Coal Mine project set to generate thousands of jobs in the region as well as the ramping up of production at the Collinsville Coal Mine, there is an opportunity to promote and support the development of Bowen and Collinsville as sustainable mining towns for people working in the resources sector and its support industries, accommodating both mining industry workers and their families.

Providing Key Services and Facilities

Facilities for recreation, leisure and entertainment are central to a region's lifestyle appeal. Considering the Whitsunday Region's size and forecast population growth, the need for a regional sports facility that can cater for anticipated population growth also warrants consideration as does a regional visual and performing arts facility.

Essential services like health and education need to be equitably distributed and / or accessible to all communities of the Whitsunday Region. Forecast population growth in Whitsunday Region centred around Cannonvale warrants investigating the need for a new high school to serve a growing catchment. Pending the outcomes of a study into future needs, Council and the State Government will need to work together to plan appropriately.

COUNCIL-LED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

6.1 Implement the 'Greening & Growing Bowen' project.

6.2 Lead negotiations with a national or international hotel chain to develop a mixed-use 5-star hotel and entertainment precinct at Airlie Beach.

6.3 Implement the master plan for the Proserpine Town Centre and Lake Proserpine.

6.4 Implement the Airlie Beach Foreshore Revitalisation Project.

6.5 Prepare and implement a free public Wi-Fi pilot project in selected towns/centres in partnership with local chambers of commerce and Tourism Whitsundays using a special rate and charge scheme. Subject to the pilot programme's success, roll it out across the Whitsunday Region's town and activity centres.

6.6 Implement the Whitsunday Regional Council Integrated Transport Plan, prioritising key infrastructure that responds to the economic drivers for the region – including roads, freight and public transport infrastructure and pedestrian and cycle access and mobility.

6.7 Investigate site options and the feasibility of developing a regional indoor multi-sports complex in the Whitsunday Regional Council area.

6.8 Implement the Cannonvale and Airlie water pipeline project.

Strategic Programming

6.9 Use master planning and place making as methods for revitalising, beautifying and connecting key sites and activity areas for residents and visitors, including: town centres; foreshores; visitor / entertainment precincts; places of cultural and environmental significance; and key vistas.

6.10 Investigate and facilitate - through land use planning and place activation measures - opportunities for local retailers to occupy laneways in key locations, to encourage a stronger sense of place and retail offering. Use Dobbins Lane anchored by retailer Colour Me Crazy in Proserpine as a local success story.

6.11 Prepare a development capacity study for Airlie Beach to determine its full potential for residential, tourist and commercial development and the social, economic, environmental and cultural implications of different land use development scenarios.

6.12 Develop and maintain a retail and commercial site audit register to identify strategic sites and associated initiatives (such as site activation and tenant mix facilitation) for business development in the Whitsunday Region's towns and activity centres.

6.13 Investigate local trader interest in opportunities to participate in Council-facilitated 'retail inspiration' workshops with leading experts to promote best-practice visual merchandising, branding and customer service and other initiatives to support the vitality and growth of the Whitsunday Region's retail centres.

COUNCIL-SUPPORTED ACTIONS

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

6.14 Progress discussions with the Queensland Department of Education on the expressed need for a State High School at Cannonvale.

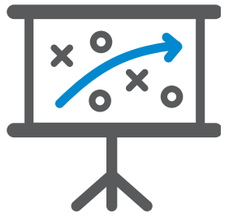
6.15 Work with Adani to develop and maintain a register of workers' home base (place of origin) and design incentives to encourage more mining workers to live locally. Explore the feasibility of designing and implementing a program to rent / procure local houses to encourage workers to take up residence in the towns of Collinsville and Bowen.

6.16 Work with Adani to identify areas or items where it can add value to local communities as a result of it being located in the Whitsunday Region. For example, this might include providing additional medical staff on standby for local emergencies or offering some seats on flights for locals on the FIFO staff flights to other locations for medical or personal appointments; or providing support for and sponsorship of local events and encouraging the company's workers to participate in local events to promote a sense of community unity.

Performance Measures

- Implementation of the master plans for the Proserpine Town Centre and Lake Proserpine and the Airlie Beach Foreshore Revitalisation Project.
- A 15 per cent increase in retail turnover in the Whitsunday Region's key activity centres by 2021.
- A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Whitsunday Regional Council and Adani regarding measures to facilitate sustainable mining towns in Bowen and Collinsville.

4. Implementing the Economic Development Strategy



4.1 DETERMINING PRIORITIES

The actions presented above are prioritised, having regard for, in broad terms, the anticipated benefits each action will deliver and Whitsunday Regional Council's capacity to act on it in a strategic fashion.

In this way, the Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 delivers workable, practical actions that Council and its partners can act on. Actions are grounded in research and consultation and they are framed so they can be readily adopted and their success measured with appropriate and easy-to-interpret performance indicators.

Prioritising where Council's resources can best be directed for the purpose of supporting the economic development of the Whitsunday Region is a key consideration of this Economic Development Strategy. To ensure Council can play a meaningful and effective role, the strategy delivers workable, practical actions that Council - either on its own as the lead agent or in partnership with others - can act on.

The prioritisation of identified activities and potential projects is guided by two broad sets of assessment criteria - realising the Whitsunday advantage and matching our capabilities - as outlined below.

REALISING THE WHITSUNDAY ADVANTAGE:

To realise our advantage, we need to understand what benefits the project, program or activity will deliver to the communities of the Whitsunday Region, its residents and businesses if achieved:

- Will it bring more business investment to the Whitsunday Region? Is it the sort of investment that Council and the community wants?
- Does it build on the Whitsunday Region's existing industry profile, capabilities and competitive advantages? Will it help to create more jobs in key and emerging industry sectors?
- Will it help to reduce leakages and retain and re-circulate more income in the region (through local income and expenditure multipliers)?
- Are there other potential impacts (e.g. social, environmental, cultural) to consider? For example:

  - Enhancing urban liveability
  - Higher quality recreational and cultural facilities
  - Improving quality of social support services

MATCHING OUR CAPABILITIES:

Matching our capabilities means the course of strategic action we take to realise our advantage will reflect Whitsunday Regional Council's capacity to implement the project or activity:

- Does the opportunity align with Whitsunday Regional Council's community planning, land use planning and corporate planning policy objectives?
- Does Council have the programs in place to support the project or program opportunity?
- Is the necessary support infrastructure available (or can it be realistically built/ accessed?)
- Does Council have the organisational capacity to implement the project or activity?
- Does Council have the financial resources?
- Does Council have the human resources?
- Does Council have the political and community will (i.e. will the community accept and support the project or activity)?
- Implementation - who is best placed to drive the opportunity? Is it Whitsunday Regional Council as the lead, as a partner or is it the responsibility of other organisations (e.g. State or Federal government, others) with support from Council?

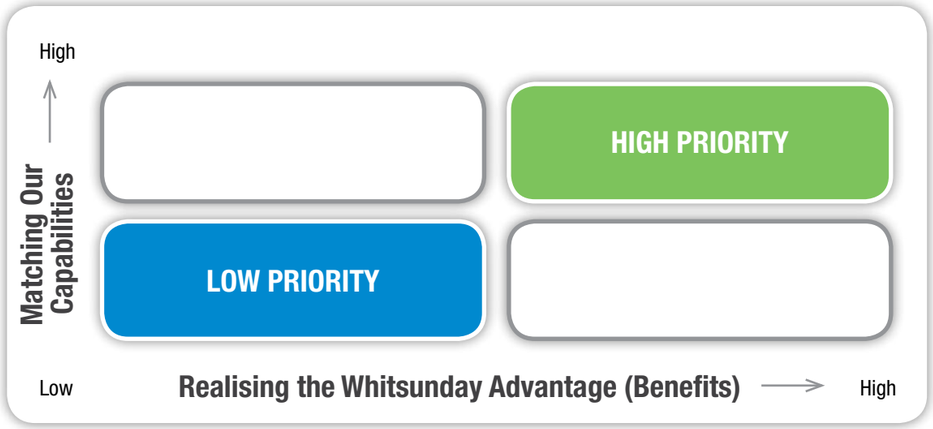
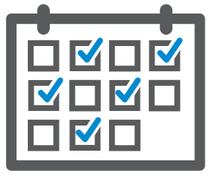


Figure 15. Whitsunday Region Opportunity Assessment and Prioritisation Matrix
Source: SC Lennon & Associates

Priority projects and activities for implementation as part of Whitsunday Regional Council's economic development work plan are identified based on the application of the above broad set of assessment criteria. They reflect priorities that Council will advance (in association with identified partners where relevant) as short-term priorities.

4.2 Year 1 Implementation Plan



The economic development promotion and facilitation priorities for the Whitsunday Region, which will be initiated over the first 12 months of this Strategy, are:

- Facilitate the opportunity to develop a mixed-use 5-star hotel and entertainment precinct at Airlie Beach (Action 1.1).
- Prepare a business case for the Bowen Marina site (Action 1.2).
- Prepare a concept plan and a business case to develop a regional food produce and tourist centre in the Bowen area (Action 1.3).
- Develop and resource a program to facilitate land-based tourism product development across the Whitsunday Region (Action 1.10).
- Establish a clear policy position on infrastructure delivery for long-term water security for the Whitsunday Region and proceed with project implementation (Action 2.1).
- Support the development of a concept plan and business case for the Bowen food processing plant (Action 2.2).
- Prepare business cases for the delivery of priority transport infrastructure (Action 2.3).
- Support the participation of growers as part of strategically targeted international trade missions (Action 2.8).
- Progress the opportunity to establish Bowen TAFE as a campus for international studies in horticulture and English (Action 2.9).
- Explore the concept of an innovation hub including opportunities for education and training utilising existing TAFE facilities at Cannonvale for climate adaptation (Action 3.1).
- Identify and plan for strategic development sites throughout the Whitsunday Region (Action 4.1).
- Implement the Whitsunday Coast Airport Strategic Plan 2016-2021 (Action 4.2).
- Prepare and publish a Whitsunday Region investor prospectus (Action 4.3).

Economic planning

- Establish an investment enquiry protocol for the Whitsunday Region (Action 4.4).
- Promote the Whitsunday Regional Council area as a location for State and Federal government services (Action 4.7).
- Develop a 'Doing Business in the Whitsundays' prospectus (Action 5.6).
- Identify opportunities for additional training programs to support local mining sector employment opportunities (Action 5.14).
- Work with Adani to develop a trade training centre in Collinsville (Action 5.15).
- Implement the 'Greening & Growing Bowen' project (Action 6.1).
- Lead negotiations to develop a mixed-use 5-star hotel and entertainment precinct at Airlie Beach (Action 6.2).
- Implement the master plan for the Proserpine Town Centre and Lake Proserpine (Action 6.3).
- Implement the Airlie Beach Foreshore Revitalisation Project (Action 6.4).
- Progress discussions for a State High School at Cannonvale (Action 6.14).

Whitsunday Regional Council, as the custodian of the Economic Development Strategy, will take a lead role in progressing strategy implementation and Council leadership will be key in this regard.

As a strategy for the region, collaborating to cultivate regional economic development partnerships will be equally important to the successful implementation of the region's economic development priorities.

4.3 Cultivating Regional Partnerships for Effective Implementation

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 will be implemented by Council in partnership with the Queensland Government, the Australian Government, regional development bodies such as the Greater Whitsunday Alliance, business and industry and other supporting partners across the region.

Internal and external reference groups and working committees will be established to ensure ownership of the Economic Development Strategy and a commitment to its implementation. To this end, Whitsunday Regional Council will:

- Take the lead, to establish and maintain formal working relationships with key economic development players at a regional and local level. At a regional level, this includes the Department of State Development, the Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3), Whitsunday ROC, RDA Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday and Trade & Investment Queensland. Locally, it will include industry associations, chambers of commerce and community progress / development associations. Support these working relationships by pursuing a culture and practice of leadership, engagement, networking, collaboration and partnerships.
- Continue to progress the activities of Council's Economic Development Advisory Committee, to explore collaborative initiatives supporting the Whitsunday Region's business and industry.

The Whitsunday Region's businesses and residents will continue to be engaged at a partnership level to ensure effective collaboration for the Strategy's development and commitment to the delivery of Council's economic development agenda.

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4.4 Monitoring Economic Development Strategy Progress and Success

The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 will have significant impact on the growth and development of the region and on the individual communities of Airlie Beach, Bowen, Cannonvale, Collinsville and Proserpine.

The Whitsunday Region's business and resident communities will need to continue to be engaged at a partnership level to ensure effective collaboration for the strategy's implementation and commitment to the delivery of Council's strategic economic development agenda going forward.

The Economic Development Strategy is being prepared in the context of the role of economic development in Whitsunday Regional Council's broader program of work and strategic objectives, and wider regional priorities. Led by the Executive Officer Economic Development and Tourism, Whitsunday Regional Council will monitor the progress of the Economic Development Strategy in order to achieve the actions set out.

Set performance measures have been established using a range of indicators, including both 'outcome' measures and 'output' measures.

Outcome measures refer to broad development outcomes at the regional level, such as industry output (gross revenue generated by the region's businesses), business establishments growth and jobs. Output measures on the other hand, include, for example, levels of business confidence, community satisfaction, numbers of investment enquiries, strategy/action milestones and project progress and completion.

In addition to key performance measures shown for each of the six action areas, the Economic Development Strategy supports the achievement of Whitsunday Regional Council's three key desired economic outcomes being:

- A $6 billion economy (a 25 per cent increase in the size of the region's economy).
- 15,000 jobs (up from 14,000 in 2017).
- Inter-regional exports that account for more than half the region's GRP (currently around 42%).

Targets will be monitored through the following methods and sources:

- Business surveys;
- Customer / visitor satisfaction surveys;
- Subscription to regularly updated and tailored data sources such as REMPLAN;
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Business Register data; and
- Department of Employment Labour Markets data.

The effectiveness of Economic Development Strategy implementation will be assessed in terms of strategy/action milestones and project progress and completion. The Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy, 2017-2021 will be reviewed annually with an update in four years.

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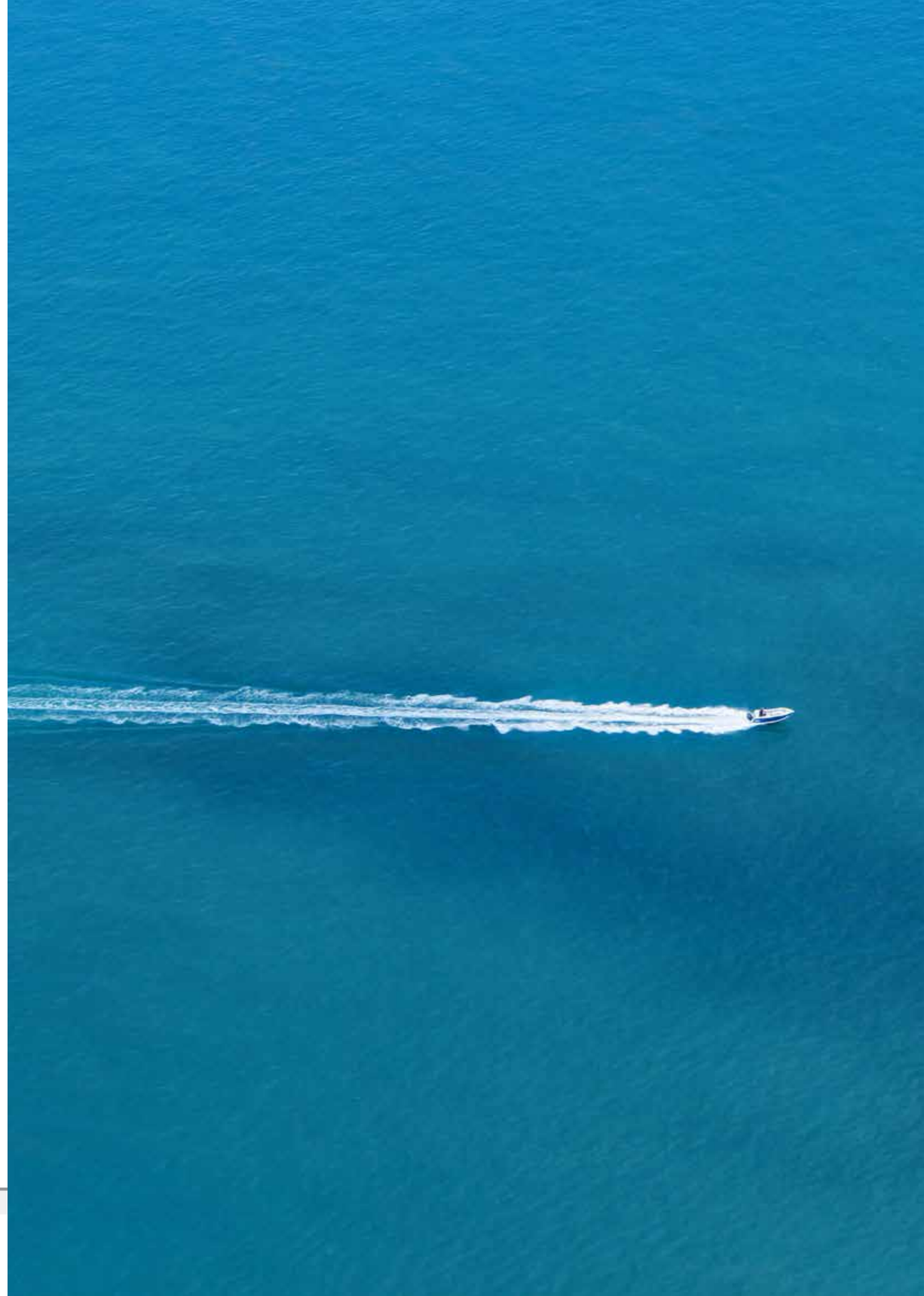

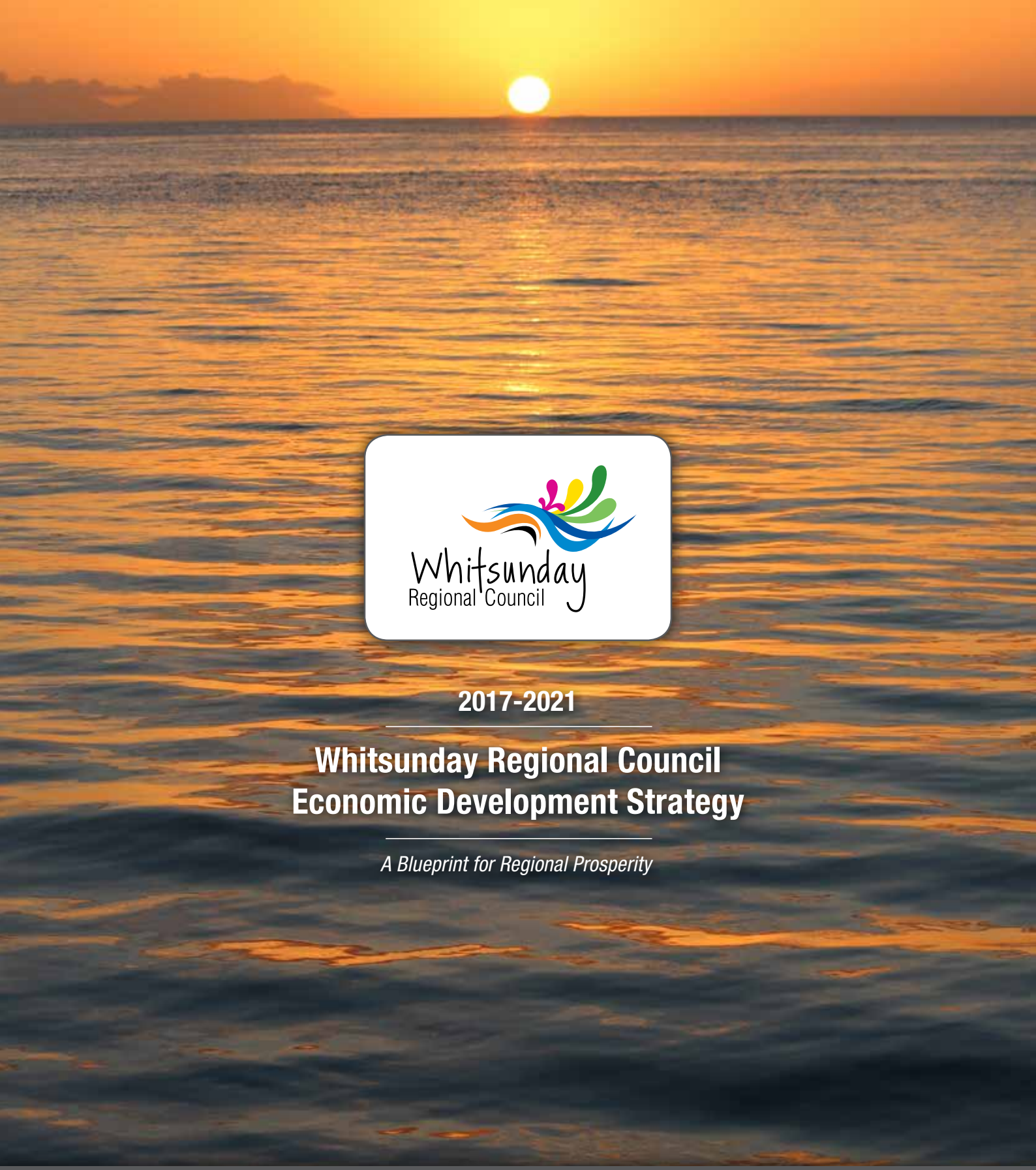

2017-2021

Whitsunday Regional Council Economic Development Strategy

A Blueprint for Regional Prosperity

Bowen Customer Service Centre
Cnr Herbert and Powell Streets
Bowen QLD 4805
Ph: (07) 4761 3600

Collinsville Customer Service Centre
Cnr Stanley and Conway Streets
Collinsville QLD 4804
Ph: (07) 4785 5366

Proserpine Customer Service Centre
83-85 Main Street
Proserpine QLD 4800
Ph: (07) 4945 0200

Fax: (07) 4945 0222 **Post: PO Box 104, Proserpine QLD 4800** **Web: www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au** **Email: info@whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au**